

RELIGION-AND
REALITY
J-H-TUCKWELL



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Tuckwell, James Henry.
Religion and reality, a
study in the philosophy of

RELIGION AND REALITY

“There is not anything I know, which hath done more mischief to Religion, than the disparaging of Reason.”

GLANVILL

“The construction of a tenable and comforting philosophy is a work of good-will; it is a beneficent deed, a gift of blessing to humanity.”

LADD

RELIGION AND
REALITY

A STUDY IN THE PHILOSOPHY OF MYSTICISM

BY

JAMES HENRY TUCKWELL

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TO
MY WIFE

WITHOUT WHOSE CONSTANT ENCOURAGEMENT AND
UNFAILING HELP THE FOLLOWING PAGES
WOULD NEVER HAVE BEEN
WRITTEN

PREFACE

THE following pages are the result of many years of careful, persistent, and, so far as possible, unbiassed and unfettered thinking on the subject of religion, in the course of which the writer found his mind, steadily, by a sort of compulsion or immanent dialectical necessity, advance, from the strict orthodoxy of one of the evangelical Christian churches into which he was born, to that universal and inclusive view of religion presented by what may appropriately be termed philosophical mysticism. And by philosophical mysticism is here meant that whole attitude of mind towards religion which results from a discovery of its rational basis and justification where it reaches its highest development in the experience of the genuine mystic. Consequently, he is not without hope that what he has here written may find some measure of sympathetic response in the minds and hearts of other thinkers who also may be engaged in the like earnest and strenuous pursuit of fundamental religious truth. For may it not, without presumption, be taken for granted, that what has met the deepest felt needs and the highest religious hopes of one sincere inquirer after ultimate truth in religion, may prove of interest, if not even of value and assistance, to others whose religious needs and aspirations are similar to his own? It may, however, be well to remind the reader that within the limits of so comparatively brief a treatise as the present, there are necessarily many interesting questions and important themes that could only be glanced at in passing, though in themselves worthy of much fuller development. The

ground the writer has sought to cover is indeed of vast extent, and his aim has, therefore, of necessity been restricted merely to exhibiting a conspectus or bird's-eye view, so to speak, of the whole subject of religious experience, as it presents itself to him after years of as conscientious and unprejudiced thought as it was in his power to devote to it. Such, then, in brief summary is the nature and purpose of the following pages.

The writer has great pleasure in acknowledging first his indebtedness to Dr Burns-Gibson, late of Harlesden, whose private philosophical class it was his privilege for some years to attend, and from whose acute criticisms and unusual dialectical skill in metaphysics he received much stimulus and instruction. The writer desires to acknowledge also the unfailing sympathy, help, and encouragement derived from his frequent intercourse, by speech and correspondence, with his gifted friend, the Rev. John Oates of North Finchley. And lastly he would thank another friend, Mr Robert Mowbray, M.A. (Oxon.), and fellow-student with him at the above-mentioned class, for valuable hints and suggestions during the writing of this volume. It is perhaps hardly needful to add that none of these gentlemen are at all responsible for any of the views herein presented.

J. H. T.

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RELIGION & REALITY

PART I—INTRODUCTORY

CHAPTER I

THE ESSENTIAL NATURE OF RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE

(I) IS THERE A RELIGIOUS ESSENCE ?

IN entering upon such a study of religion as that which we have specially set before us, in fact in undertaking to study religion from any of the many points of view from which the subject may be approached, it would seem to be indispensable to success that we should first endeavour to gain some sort of idea as to what the particular subject of our research is to be. We should not expect to be rewarded for our pains by any fruitful and lasting results, if we proceeded with our investigation without first making it clear what is at least the general character of that department of human experience which we have undertaken to examine. What then do we mean when we speak of religion ?

We find existing still, as there has existed through all the recorded ages of human history, an almost endless diversity of religions, a diversity so great that it seems at first sight a most difficult, if not impossible, task to discover anything they possess in common ; and yet we call them all " religion " ; whereby we indicate that we feel, if we do not distinctly recognize, that there is some identical principle running through them all. When we speak

of the Christian religion, the Mohammedan religion, the Zoroastrian religion, the Buddhist religion, and so on, is there any one principle, or sentiment, any one identical experience by reason of which we class them under one common name, and call them all "religion"? Our first endeavour must be to answer this question.

Now it is obvious at a glance that it certainly is not because they have any particular doctrine in common, nor because of any ritual form or forms in which they agree, that they are classified under one name. Nothing is more notorious than the fierceness of the controversies and of the persecutions that have raged all through history over differences on these questions, and the noise of the tumult is still ringing in our ears. Seeing that religions concern themselves specially with man's relation to the Deity, it might be thought that at least there would be some approach to an agreement in their conception of the divine nature. But, leaving out of view the crude objects worshipped by the earlier more childlike and more backward races, the higher religions of to-day differ widely, even fundamentally, in their ideas of God. The tri-personality of the Deity, so characteristic of the Christian religion, is anathema with the Mohammedan, to whom the unity of the Godhead is a cardinal article of his faith. But by the cultured Hindu the tri-personality and the uni-personality of God are equally rejected as unworthy, because personality is a finite category, and therefore inapplicable to the infinite, universal, all-inclusive Being. In Buddhism, again, we are startled to find a religion that, so far as its creed is concerned, must be pronounced atheistic. Yet all these are rightly and necessarily called by us religions. One thing is thus clear at the outset, that we cannot find the community of principle, by reason of which they are called religions, in any one identical belief concerning God. We should meet with the same result if we went through the whole catalogue of beliefs in the various religions, or sought in the well-nigh endlessly varied

forms of worship for a common element. Not in any of these would such a principle be discovered. It must, consequently, be sought if such a principle there be, elsewhere than in creed or cult. Where then shall we find the essence of religion? Is such an essence anywhere to be found?

(2) NECESSARY TO DISTINGUISH BETWEEN THE
ESSENCE OF RELIGION AND ITS FORMS

This brings into prominence at once the vital distinction between the religious faculty, sentiment, or principle—call it by what name you will—and the forms, whether ritual or doctrinal, in which it seeks expression. These latter are but its clothes, the forms of its embodiment, the instruments by which it works in human life. As such they may and will endlessly vary. But the expression of religion and the experience of religion, intimately as they are associated and bound up together, are not the same, and must be carefully distinguished all through our researches.

Just as we can trace one and the same vital impulse through all the infinitely varied forms it assumes from amœba up to man, so may we hope to be able also to discover and to trace an identical religious impulse, one principle operative throughout, to be detected under the crude and oftentimes repulsive forms of savage worship through all the intermediate varieties of faith and practice, up to the exalted experiences in which the higher religions issue. And just as we should fall into gross error if in the study of biology we were to attempt to identify the vital principle with any one of its forms however noble, and were to treat the rest of animated nature as having only the delusive appearance but not the reality of life; so should we err, and as fatally, if we did not distinguish the vital essence of religion, but identified it with some one or other of its manifold incarnations,

however beautiful, noble and pure the particular form we selected. It is necessary to lay stress on this point, because it is one of the most difficult things in the world to treat religion in which our deepest interests are involved in this impartial and philosophical manner. To many this sort of vivisection of their living religious experience seems particularly odious and brutal; they instinctively shrink from it, because, in proportion as religion is a deep and vital experience, does it seem to be essentially bound up with the particular forms of thought and ritual in which it is clothed. Yet if in this spirit of prejudice we strive to understand what religion is in its very essence, we shall be likely to fail conspicuously when confronted by the forms it assumes in other faiths than our own. We shall be prone, not only to reject the beliefs as not true, but the experience behind them as either non-existent or not genuine. What is needed in the interests of truth as well as of charity is, that we recognize genuine religious experience wherever it exists. For this purpose such an analysis as we have undertaken is indispensable.

Into what fatal error and confusion the noblest and subtlest minds fall when religion is identified with creed or ritual is notorious, and was never more conspicuously illustrated than, for example, in the case of Cardinal Newman, to which in this context it will be worth while to allude, because of its great instructiveness. There is perhaps no figure in the religious history of the past century so fascinating, and yet in many respects so pathetic, as that of Newman. His was a great and saintly character with a vein of deep sincerity running through his whole career, untainted with any low ambition or worldly purpose of any sort. As to the lustre of his genius there is no question, and there is no need to do more than refer to it here. Yet with all his incomparable gifts of intellect and heart, as a religious guide impartial judgment is obliged reluctantly to pro-

nounce him an almost total failure. From him no ray of light falls to illuminate the future pathway that humanity has to tread. From him our religious perplexities gain no help or alleviation. The reason is to be found chiefly in the invincible dogmatic bias of his mind, in a constitutional incapacity to distinguish the essence of religion from its form, its substance from its shadow. From this source spring what often surprises us in so great and gracious a mind, an amazing childish credulity, and, it must be confessed, at times a faltering sense of truth. In his "Apologia pro Vita Sua," he frankly acknowledges his dogmatic prejudice. "From the age of fifteen," he writes, "dogma has been the fundamental principle of my religion; I cannot enter into the idea of any othersort of religion. Religion as a mere sentiment is to me a dream and a mockery."¹ Newman's is perhaps the most typical and most subtle dogmatic religious genius that ever lived, and for this reason we select him as a pre-eminent example for our purpose. The most striking characteristic about such minds is the tremendous dogmatic demands they make upon the universe, demands which the universe simply refuses to honour. Wm. James, in his "Varieties of Religious Experience," tells us that Margaret Fuller, a well-known New-England Transcendentalist, was fond of saying, "I accept the Universe." Some one repeated this to Thomas Carlyle, whose sardonic comment is reported to have been: "Gad! she'd better." But such a mind as Newman's won't or can't accept the universe. He showed but little interest in science. He found no God in nature in the sense in which Wordsworth and Shelley did, and in which our best art and poetry do. Instead, he elaborated a remarkably brilliant and powerful defence of his position by the use of the psychological test of truth known in current philosophical phraseology

¹ "Apologia pro Vita Sua," p. 49.

as the pragmatic. His "University Sermons" and his "Grammar of Assent" are remarkable expositions, but as futile as they are brilliant. From beginning to end of these and of his other writings you are not able to discover in what lies, after all, the vital essence of religion as a great human experience.

Now on such a theory as Newman's there can be consistently only two classes of religion—The True and The False—the true religion, of course, being held alone by those who believe the correct dogmas. What, then, is the nature of that experience which lies behind the false doctrines and rites of other religions, and which they more or less perfectly or imperfectly express? Whatever the origin of their beliefs and practices, and whether correct or otherwise, they certainly evince the presence of some kind of religious experience in the hearts of their professors. Whatever else that experience is not, it is at all events religious. But if these dogmatically false religions have some sort of religious experience behind them, they surely must have something in common with that religion which claims alone to be dogmatically the true one. Now one would think this identical principle, that we must suppose to exist in all religions, is surely worth considering for its own sake, and not to be treated in the easy fashion of Newman, as mere sentiment, a mockery, or a dream. Moreover, the value, the religious value, he himself ascribes to our moral nature is manifestly inconsistent with his dogmatic view of religion, seeing he recognizes in its normal activity the presence and rule of the divine. Now it is just the presence of this principle common to all religions, into the nature of which it will be our purpose presently to inquire, that enables us to regard them as essentially one, whatever be their varying degrees of merit and value in other respects. And this religious sentiment, this susceptibility to religious experience, scorned or ignored by minds constructed

like Newman's, but which reveals its presence in all the various religions of the world, turns out to be commensurate with the race, and to be intimately bound up with man's rational nature, and is, in fact, as Carlyle said, the chief thing about him. This religious principle or sentiment, this susceptibility to so profound an experience, must, then, not be confounded with any one set of religious doctrines or practices whatever, but is greater and more important than any, as it is indeed the very root whence they all spring. It is, as we have said, like life itself—in fact, it is one of life's highest functions, if not its very highest, and worthy to be studied on its own account wherever and however it may manifest its presence.

(3) WM. JAMES'S DENIAL THAT THERE IS A RELIGIOUS ESSENCE EXAMINED

Before we proceed further in our attempt to fathom the depths of this mysterious instinct in human nature with a view to discover its essence, in our contention that there is some one identical principle, present alike in all genuine religious experiences, we have to meet a formidable objector in the late Wm. James of Harvard. James as a brilliant psychologist confronts us with an explicit denial that there is any one principle or element present alike in every variety of religious experience. We must confess that it was not at first without some misgiving that we felt obliged to differ from so eminent and able a psychologist. In his work entitled "The Varieties of Religious Experience," he has rendered a real and permanent service to religion by securing for the validity of the religious consciousness the confirmation and support of a sound scientific psychology. On the point under discussion we frankly confess, therefore, that we should have hesitated much more than we did before differing from him, but that as we read on we were re-

assured by finding that he himself supplied us with his own corrective and refutation. It is, moreover, in no carping and hypercritical spirit, eager to display its ingenuity by seizing upon an apparent incongruity in an illustrious author, that we direct attention to James's inconsistency. We owe him too great a debt of gratitude for his epoch-making book to indulge in such folly. The reason we call attention to what strikes us as a manifest contradiction is, that by endeavouring to explain how James came to fall into it, we were better able to use him as a guide along the path that would lead to the discovery of what we sought, viz., whether there is an essential principle in all varieties of religious experience alike, and if so, what the nature of that principle is. "Most books on the philosophy of religion," says Wm. James, "try to begin with precise definition of what its essence consists of. Some of these would-be definitions may possibly come before us in the later portions of this course, and I shall not be pedantic enough to enumerate any of them to you now. Meanwhile the very fact that they are so many and so different from one another is enough to prove, that the word religion cannot stand for any single essence, but is rather a collective name. The theorizing mind tends always to the over-simplification of its materials. This is the root of all that absolutism and dogmatism by which both philosophy and religion have been infested."¹ We confess that, in reflecting on this statement, we could not help being impressed with the strangeness and incongruity of this denial of any distinctive essence or principle, whereby we could recognize religious experience as such, in a work devoted to the discussion of its varieties. The title of his book, "The Varieties of Religious Experience," seemed to suggest that, when he chose it, he certainly had in mind some specific experience, and not a mere collection, the varieties of which he proposed to investigate. And, in

¹ "Varieties of Religious Experience," p. 26.

truth, the title does accurately designate the contents of the book. It was therefore a little perplexing to be told, that there was no single essence or principle in religion, but only a collection of experiences. A collective name is, surely, never given at random to a number of objects that have no resemblance, but by reason of some identity discerned or believed to exist amid their diversity. It seemed, consequently, a very glaring contradiction when we read that in religion we only meet with a plurality of unrelated experiences; experiences, that is to say, with nothing in common; a mere collection which are yet called all by the same name. This looked like pluralism run to seed. On what principle then, we asked ourselves, has the selection of experiences been made, and why are they all called religious? But there is one word in the last sentence in the above quotation that seems to afford a clue to James's difficulty, and that is in the word "*absolutism.*" Certainly if there be a single principle or essence which characterizes all religion, if there be a special dominant note whereby we can recognize religious experience as such, then it may be freely conceded that in the end it will be difficult to avoid an absolutist interpretation. We were in this way driven to conclude, that the refusal to admit any single operative principle in religion must be explained on the ground of the strong pluralistic and empirical bias, and the repugnance to absolutist metaphysics and logic, for which James is famous.

In seeking for this identical principle James in the first instance restricts himself to psychology. As a psychologist he proceeds to inspect the various emotions with a view to ascertaining if there is any one that is specifically religious. He fails, he says, to discover any one emotion that is specifically religious, or indeed any class of emotions with any common feature in respect of which they are so designated. No doubt this may be accepted as to a great extent true, though not altogether.

James himself seems a few pages further on to discover in solemnity a common emotional feature generally present in religious experience. In any case, however, this is not its essence. There is, without doubt, a very wide variety of religious emotions. There is, James points out, religious love, religious fear, religious awe, religious joy, and so forth. Yet these are only our common emotions of love, fear, awe, joy, etc., awakened by and directed towards religious objects, with nothing specifically religious about them regarded *per se*, *i.e.* apart from their objects. "Similarly," he adds, "of all the various sentiments which may be called into play in the lives of religious persons as a concrete state of mind, made up of a feeling plus a specific sort of object, religious emotions, of course, are psychic entities, distinguishable from other concrete emotions; but there is no ground for assuming a simple abstract religious emotion existing as a distinct elementary mental affection by itself, present in every religious experience without exception."¹ Prof. James here suggests that we might hope to find the differentia of religion, not indeed in any distinguishable emotion, but in some definable specific object or objects by which various emotions are evoked, and in relation to which they become specifically religious.

But the light we thought was the dawn turns out to be but an *ignis-fatuus*, it brightens only to delude and to disappear. No such specific object is indicated here, and the attempt to do so would be as vain as was the former attempt to trace out some emotional identity. For religious objects are, of course, innumerable and vary almost infinitely in character, including such a simple thing as Jacob's stone at Bethel as well as the Vedic Varuna, the all-embracing sky. Sometimes they are invisible and wholly spiritual, culminating in one supreme divinity—Zeus, Allah, or Jahveh, as the case may be. And James indicates as much, for he says at once: "As there

¹ *Op. cit.*, p. 28.

seems to be no one elementary religious emotion, but only a storehouse of religious emotions upon which religious objects may draw, so there might conceivably also prove to be no one specific kind of religious object and essential religious act." In view of this statement we appear to be reduced to a rather hopeless condition. We are setting out to inquire into the nature and function in human life of what we denominate religious experience ; and we are told at the outset that there is no one elementary emotion, no one specific kind of object, and no one specific kind of act common to religion in all its variations by which it can be distinguished as such. How then, we must still ask, are we to recognize when an emotion, an object, or an act is religious ? Where is their differentia to be found ? Or, are we to start on our inquiry without knowing what our inquiry is about ?

Now we have referred in detail to Prof. James's exposition for a special reason, namely, as affording in our opinion, a conspicuous instance of the failure of any attempt to deal adequately with the religious consciousness exclusively by the psychological and empirical method which Prof. James affects. It is quite true, and we unhesitatingly acquiesce in the statement, that we shall seek in vain to discover the real essence of religion in any one "abstract" emotion, or in any one specific kind of object, or in any one definite kind of act. The secret we shall see lies far deeper and is far more integral to our very being than these comparatively evanescent things. And it is at this very point, as we shall now try to show, that Wm. James himself comes to our assistance, but only by abandoning the exclusively empirical attitude and combining for the nonce the psychologist with the metaphysician. And it is because this is so instructive, and illustrates so distinctly and impressively the impossibility of finally separating the psychology of religion from its implicit metaphysics, that we shall venture, even at the risk of somewhat wearying the reader, to

pursue James's exposition of religious experience somewhat further.

The attempt is frequently made to separate both theology and psychology from metaphysics. Both alike strive to repudiate the need of critical philosophy to justify their method and their conclusions. We think the attempt futile, and we take Prof. James's work as a case in point. But to proceed. James gives us first a preliminary definition of the boundaries within which his inquiries will be restricted. He circumscribes his topic as follows: "Religion . . . shall mean for us the feeling, acts, and experiences of individual men in their solitude, so far as they apprehend themselves to stand in relation to whatever they may consider the divine." Taking the subject as thus delimited, the question presents itself at once: In what sense are we to take the word "*divine*"? It is a much more comprehensive expression than the phrase "specific religious object" previously used, and includes what is invisible, universal, and absolute as well as what is perceptible to the senses. At the same time it is vague and indefinite, and sometimes it becomes very difficult to determine whether any such conception exists. The cases of Buddha and Emerson at once suggest themselves. It is rather difficult to say exactly what was the idea of the divine in relation to which Emerson apprehended himself to stand. And Buddha is generally supposed to have had no such conception at all. Now it is just at this point, in endeavouring to answer the question what it is these typical religious minds conceived as the divine, that James, in spite of himself, becomes unconsciously metaphysical. For it must be borne in mind that there is no distinct boundary line between psychology and metaphysics; the one shades by imperceptible gradations into the other. And so it comes to pass that in expounding what is meant by "the godlike" or "the divine," whilst apparently still keeping to the rôle of the descriptive psychologist, he makes the

transition over the boundary, and unconsciously uses the language of that very absolutism which at other times he regards with such aversion. "What then," he asks, "is that essential, godlike quality—be it embodied in a concrete deity or not—our relation to which determines our character as religious men?"¹ The answer, it can hardly be disputed, has a distinct metaphysical ring. "For one thing, the gods are considered to be first in the way of being and power. They over-arch and envelop, and from them there is no escape. What relates to them is the first and last word in the way of truth. Whatever then were most primal and enveloping and deeply true might at this rate be treated as godlike, and a man's religion might thus be identified with his attitude, whatever it might be, towards what he felt to be the primal truth." Now whilst not committing ourselves to the acceptance without modification of what is here said, we would draw attention to this definition of the divine, which, though rather vague, we think on the whole to be correct. If it is what is first in being and power, if it over-arches and envelops, is unescapable, and is the primal truth, then the divine or godlike, so conceived, can hardly be placed in the same category of being with other finite existences. Such a conception of the divine bears a distinct family resemblance to the Absolute Idea of Hegel, the Ultimate Reality of Bradley, the Over-Soul of Emerson, and the Brahma of the Upanishads. But let us hear James's further descriptions. We are told that in order to get at the specific religious attitudes, we must go behind the foreground of existence and reach down to the sense of "the whole residual cosmos as an everlasting presence" which in some sense every one of us possesses. Now this does indeed look as though we must seek for "the divine" in no mere phenomenal existence, but go behind such and discover it in the presence to the soul (may we not also say in the

¹ *Op. cit.*, p. 34.

soul) of the everlasting cosmic whole. It appears as though James had unwittingly allowed the glowing terminology of his vivid descriptions to transport him into the region of Transcendentalism. But whether he broke through the proper limits of psychological description wittingly or not, we are frankly grateful for this light thrown upon the object of our quest, namely, the essential nature of religious experience. Moreover, we are now prepared to understand what at first appeared as a flat contradiction marring these otherwise brilliant pages, for we read, "It is a good rule in physiology when we are studying the meaning of an organ to ask after its most peculiar and characteristic sort of performance, and to seek its office in that one of its functions which no other organ can possibly exert. The essence of religious experiences, the thing by which we must judge them, must be that element or quality in them which we can meet nowhere else."¹ Now this certainly seems discrepant with what we were previously told, namely, "that religion cannot stand for any single principle or essence, but is rather a collective name." The discrepancy can be removed, and removed only, by seeking for the essence of religion, not in some phenomenal identity such as might be described by empirical psychology, but in the deeper bases of our life with which it is the province of metaphysics or transcendental philosophy to deal. Not then, in any particular creed or cult, nor in any one specific emotion or other mental state, is this essence to be found, but in some deeper cosmic whole or primal being present and operative throughout.

But in order to assure the reader that we have not over-strained the meaning of Prof. James's language, we must point to some further metaphysical admissions on his part. He says that in the intenser religious experiences we find a character that is perfectly distinct, and that there is a state of mind known to religious men

¹ P. 45.

but to no others. We are thus encouraged to look for some differentia in religious experience of a nature quite indubitable, and James himself helps us to its discovery. When, furthermore, we read that religious feeling is an absolute addition to the subject's range of life, that it gives him a new sphere of power, that it is an added dimension of emotion, and finally that it is "a sort of happiness in the absolute and everlasting," we feel that we have at last got to the root of the matter, and have reached the principle we were in search of; or if we may not say quite so much as this, at least we have discerned the direction in which our search for such a principle must lie. Psychology here, at all events, plays the handmaid to metaphysics.

We have tarried thus long over these statements of Wm. James's, because we want, if possible, to secure each step behind us as we advance; and we have therefore thought it would best promote our purpose, first to tread with James the *à posteriori* pathway of descriptive psychology, before attempting the *à priori* road of metaphysical deduction; and we cannot be too grateful to Wm. James, that notwithstanding his initial protest, that no essential principle characteristic of religious experience can be found, we now have from him nevertheless the admission that the secret of this principle, as disclosed at least in its higher ranges, lies in the feeling of our relation to what is Absolute and Everlasting; names which we, though Prof. James does not, make bold to write with capital letters.

But the assistance we can obtain from him is not yet exhausted. On page 388 he records an experience of his own when under the influence of nitrous oxide gas, an experience essentially religious and mystical, and which has always seemed to us of an extraordinarily significant character, coming as it does from the pen of the protagonist of pluralism and pragmatism in philosophy. It is a testimony from experience of all the

more value, as in all such cases, because it is in direct opposition to James's own metaphysical views. His observations are so remarkable, and also so germane to our present inquiry, that we make no apology for quoting them at large. One conclusion, he says, was forced upon his mind at the time, and his impression of its truth was never afterwards shaken, namely, that our normal waking consciousness is but one special type of consciousness, whilst all about it, parted from it by the filmiest of screens, there lie potential forms of consciousness entirely different. It is, therefore, somewhere in these profounder depths of our life that the mystery of religion lies. Proceeding in his own characteristically picturesque style, he thus tells us what was the result of these experiments on himself. "Looking back," he says, "on my own experiences, they all converge to a kind of insight to which I cannot help ascribing some metaphysical significance. The keynote of it is invariably a reconciliation. It is as if the opposites of the world whose contradictoriness and conflict make all our difficulties and troubles were melted into unity. Not only do they, as contrasted species, belong to one and the same genus, but one of the species, the nobler and better one, is itself the genus, and so soaks up and absorbs its opposite into itself. This is a dark saying, I know, when expressed in terms of common logic, but I cannot wholly escape from its authority. I feel as if it must mean something, something like what the Hegelian philosophy means, if one could only lay hold of it more clearly. Those who have ears to hear, let them hear; to me the living sense of its reality only comes in the artificial, mystic state of mind." Then in a very important note he adds, that readers of Hegel can hardly doubt that "that sense of a perfected Being, with all its otherness soaked up into itself which dominates his whole philosophy, must have come from the prominence in his consciousness of mystical moods

like this, in most persons kept subliminal." To this experience of his, then, evoked though it was artificially under the influence of nitrous oxide gas, James nevertheless does not scruple to attribute a metaphysical significance. He even admits it was distinctly Hegelian, that is, it was marked by a sense of Perfected Being in which the oppositions, the contradictions, the conflicts of our troubled lives melt into unity. Finally, in his chapter on Mysticism, wherein the above experiments on himself are narrated, there is a really fine panegyric on Mysticism in which its absolutist significance is unhesitatingly celebrated and which the reader will, we believe, thank us for quoting. "In mystic states," he says, "we both become one with the Absolute (the capital letter is this time James's own), and we become aware of our oneness. This is the everlasting and triumphant mystical tradition, hardly altered by difference of clime or creed. In Hinduism, in Neoplatonism, in Sufism, in Christian Mysticism, in Whitmanism we find the same recurring note, so that there is about mystical utterances an eternal unanimity which ought to make a critic stop and think, and which brings it about that the mystical classics have, as has been said, neither birthday nor native land. Perpetually telling of the unity of man with God, their speech antedates languages and they do not grow old."

Now it will surely excite interest to know how it is that James subsequently repudiates the validity of these experiences, his own included, and attacks with vigour almost approaching to fierceness Absolutist Metaphysics. The value of the testimony, the noetic value of these mystic states, their apparently monistic, metaphysical revelation, is curiously discounted by our being warned that what we have been studying is, after all, but the classic mystical tradition, a privileged case, an extract only kept true to type by the selection of the fittest specimens and their presentation in "schools." It is

he assures us, carved out of a larger mass, and if we take the larger mass as seriously as religious mysticism has historically taken itself, we find that the supposed unanimity largely disappears. It is dualistic in the Sankhya and monistic in the Vedanta philosophy. If it is in the selected type of mysticism pantheistic as a whole, yet the Spanish mystics are anything but pantheists, since for them the category of personality is absolute, and union with God is rather an occasional miracle than an original identity, and so forth. Then the other non-classical half of Mysticism is called in as a counter-witness, and we are, we confess to our amazement, referred to the text-books on insanity. "Open," says James, "any one of these, and you will find abundant cases of mystical ideas are cited as characteristic symptoms of enfeebled or deluded states of mind. In delusional insanity—paranoia, as they sometimes call it—we have diabolic mysticism, a sort of religious mysticism turned upside down."¹ And he remarks on this in a sentence which contains apparently a strange Hibernianism, that "it is evident that from the point of view of their psychological mechanism the classic mysticism and these *lower* mysticisms spring from the same mental level," *i.e.* from the great subliminal region. Now we must frankly acknowledge that we find it difficult to understand quite how, if these diabolical mysticisms are *lower* than the classical, they could possibly both spring from the same level. Why, then, are they called lower? No doubt, regarded merely from the point of view of their psychological mechanism, they may appear to spring from the same level; but in that case the distinction of higher and lower can only have reference to their metaphysical significance or rational value. And this we do not hesitate to believe is exactly the case. And then we are surely right to reject the testimony of the morbid states and activities

¹ *Op. cit.*, p. 426.

of an insane mysticism (if mysticism it could fairly be called) as irrelevant in deciding the value of a sane mysticism, as we would reject the hallucinations of madness when estimating the value of the testimony of our senses in their normal operation. We shall in the sequel have abundant opportunity of seeing how the nature and function of thought bring strong confirmation to the vision of the higher mysticism, and that art and poetry also contribute their witness.

And now let us see at what conclusion we have so far arrived concerning the nature and essence of religion. Negatively, we have found that the religious principle cannot be bound up with any particular dogma or creed; nor can it be identified with any special rites or ceremonies; nor restricted to any one emotional state; nor evoked by any specific kind of object. The principle or essence of religion lies deep in the foundations of our being, in those transmarginal regions or subliminal depths the existence of which our psychologists are pretty unanimous in now admitting. Positively, it has its roots in some sense of the divine within us. And by the divine we may understand to be meant, in the higher ranges of religious experience at least, that which is perfect, absolute, everlasting, or eternal. How the presence of this sense of the divine manifests itself in the lower ranges of experience we shall presently see. It is enough to say here that in seeking to understand any principle that has developed anywhere we must always interpret its lower forms by its higher, not the higher by the lower—the acorn by the oak, not the oak by the acorn. The presence and activity of this sense of the divine is, then, so far as we have gone at present, the essential principle of all religious experience. The forms it assumes, and what from its highest functioning we may conclude as to the ultimate nature of what is termed the divine, or whether we can legitimately make any such inference at all, will have to be considered

further on. But so far we have at least seen where to look for the essential principle of religious experience, and have already discovered in a general way what the nature of that principle is.

(4) WHY PSYCHOLOGY IS INADEQUATE TO DISCOVER THE ESSENCE OF RELIGION

It is important, indeed indispensable, that we should pause at this point in our inquiry in order that we may see precisely why it is that the scientific or psychological method of itself—*i.e.* without the recognition of the metaphysical or transcendental elements and aspects of experience—must necessarily prove inadequate when we attempt to ascertain what is the essential nature of religion. In the history of modern philosophy it was the British thinkers—Locke, Berkeley, Hume, and their successors—who set the example, since so widely followed, of applying the scientific—*i.e.* the analytic—method almost exclusively to the study of the mind. “Psychology,” said Prof. Huxley, “is a part of the science of life or biology, which differs from other branches of that science merely in so far as it deals with the psychological instead of the physical phenomena of life. As there is an anatomy of the body so there is an anatomy of the mind; the psychologist dissects mental phenomena into elementary states of consciousness, as the anatomist resolves limbs into tissues and tissues into cells. The one traces the development of complex organs from simple rudiments, the other follows the building of complex conceptions out of simpler constituents of thought.”¹ Here it will be seen that the mind is regarded merely as a complex or compound of pre-existing elements or rudiments, which have been combined by a process which J. S. Mill described as a sort of “mental chemistry.” The constituents of which the

¹ Huxley's “Hume,” p. 50.

mind is composed, it is taken for granted, are related to one another in exactly the same external, mechanical fashion as are the atoms of matter in space. Hume's definition of mind expresses this view in terms even more crude and blunt. "The mind," he tells us, "is nothing but a heap or collection of different perceptions, united together by certain relations, and supposed, though falsely, to be endowed with perfect simplicity and identity."¹ Prof. Bain, approaching the mind from the same point of view, gave, it will be remembered, to one of his most important works the significant title—*Mental and Moral Science*.

Now it was the essential spirit of the critical philosophy of Germany, to which religion is so greatly indebted, that it rejected this purely scientific or analytic method of the British philosophy, as not only incapable of rendering a satisfactory account of the mind, but as unable to give us the ultimate truth concerning anything whatever. The special function of psychology, like that of any other science, is not to conduct us to the ultimate truth or first principles of things, but to give us an exact description and classification of facts. This, however, necessarily involves assumptions which it is not the special function of science, but the special function of critical philosophy, to examine and discuss. There are notions, often implicit and unrecognized, employed by all the sciences, but which they do not consider themselves called upon to criticize and which they accept without examination. But such notions cannot be allowed to pass as dogmas or axioms, final and beyond the possibility of any further inquiry. For instance, it declares that the assumption of an ultimate distinction or separation between the two realms of fact, those of the external or physical and those of the internal or psychical world, requires thorough examination, and their final unity recognized. But this cannot

¹ Quoted by Huxley, *op. cit.*, p. 63.

be done by purely descriptive science or psychology. Again, to start, as Huxley and Hume do, with the assumption that the mental world is a mere series or collection or association of psychical facts or events externally related like bodies in space, ignoring the subject for whom they are, is regarded by the critical philosophy as false and inadequate, as untrue to the fundamental nature of mind, because entirely mechanical in its assumptions and method. It claims that the nature of the thinking subject must itself be examined, and its movements and meanings, if possible, brought into view. But the mere psychologist in his search for the ego, pursuing exclusively the scientific method, *inspects* the series of his ideas, perceptions, etc., very much as a witness might inspect a number of persons for the purpose of identifying a criminal amongst them. But failing to find any self or ego in the series or collection, he straightway denies its real existence altogether and dismisses it as a mere chimera, a needless and baseless assumption. Of course, if the subject be, as without doubt it is, the presupposition of all possible knowledge and experience whatsoever, it cannot appear as one fact and event amongst the many in a mental series or collection. And therefore to neglect, to deny, or to explain away this profoundest fact of experience, namely, the unity and identity of the self or subject, or to attempt to seek for it as though it were but one mental fact among others, is to reduce and restrict our knowledge of the mind merely to its phenomena, without asking the question how on such a view of the nature of mind any knowledge is possible at all. It is, in truth, the real existence of this unity, this principle of identity, this subject, self, or ego, this universal—call it by what name you will—that constitutes the foundation of all experience. The profoundest division in philosophy will ever be found between egoists and non-egoists, between those who do and those who do not recognize

the reality of this basis. It was consequently to the nature of the self or subject that the critical philosophy from Kant onward directed its attention. Its nature with all that we find ourselves obliged to ascribe to it, implicitly as well as explicitly, was probed and interrogated. And this has still to be done, as we shall see before we conclude this inquiry, if we would find any satisfactory answer to the question: What is the real nature and the significance for human life of religious experience? Or, to put the question in a somewhat different form: What is it we mean when we speak of God or the divine?

CHAPTER II

SOME CLASSICAL DEFINITIONS OF RELIGION

IT will not be necessary for us to delay our present inquiry into the essence of religion and its function in human life, by considering in detail the various attempts that have from time to time been made to define and explain its origin and essence. Nevertheless there are certain typical instances of such attempts, which it is desirable to take note of before going further ; since to do so will make our own view of the nature of religion the clearer by its contrast or coincidence with them, as the case may be. Our inquiry is primarily, let it be observed, not into the historic origin of creeds or cults, as though the essence of religion lay in them, but into religious experience itself. By this method, and by this method alone, can we arrive at a true idea as to what the fundamental principle of religion really is ; and it is because they are such brilliant examples of this method that writers like Wm. James, Starbuck, Leuba, and others are so helpful, and have laid us under so great an obligation.

We must not therefore expect to find much help in our study from such writers as, for example, Tylor, Spencer, Grant Allen, and Andrew Lang. The attempt to trace the origin or discover the essence of religion in animism, fetichism, or the worship of dead ancestors is manifestly futile. What we are seeking is the origin of worship itself, its motive and significance. To start by presupposing and using in our interpretation what it is our business to account for and to trace to its origin, is

a manifest *petitio principii*. What we have to discover, if we can, is the origin of worship itself, and exactly what it is that constitutes the object to which it is directed a deity, divinity, or god. It explains nothing, therefore, to be told, for example, by Grant Allen, that all religions equally spring directly or indirectly from the worship of a single deified man more or less etherealized.¹ This is certainly not correct. But even if it were it would still leave the root-questions of our whole inquiry unanswered, namely, *why* the spirits of dead men were deified ; what to deify signifies ; how man came by this concept of deity ; what to worship really means ; and how man came to worship at all. The real origin of religion and its essence can only be found in correct answers to these questions. What we want to discover is the motive, the nature of the experience, that lies behind what we term deification and worship. It is in this subjective or psychological factor, and not merely by tracking out the historic origin of creeds and cults, that we must search for our explanation of the true nature of religious experience and of its place and function in the life of the race. Such writers, therefore, as those above mentioned we may leave on one side in our present inquiry.

Another and more psychological view of the origin of religion and of its nature and function in human life, to which we would call brief attention, is what we may term the socially utilitarian or pragmatic view. This theory of religion is well represented by Mr Benjamin Kidd, the able author of a well-known book entitled "Social Evolution." "A religion," says this writer, "is a form of belief providing an ultra-rational sanction for that large class of conduct in the individual, where his interests and the interests of the social organism are antagonistic, and by which the former are rendered subordinate to the latter in the general interests of the

¹ "Evolution of Idea of God" (Rationalist Press Association Series), pp. 10, 16.

evolution which the race is undergoing.”¹ And this, he asserts, is the principle that lies at the basis of all religions. He concludes, therefore, that there is no such thing as a rational religion; a rational religion, he tells us, “is a scientific impossibility, representing from the nature of the case an inherent contradiction in terms.”²

Now upon this definition of religion it will be sufficient to remark, that certainly in its more advanced stages religion concerns itself primarily with the value of the individual as an end in himself, and not merely as a temporary instrument for the promotion of the interests of the race. Assuredly religion cannot be explained as merely a species of cajolery which humanity has somehow or other succeeded in perpetrating upon itself, a subtile and crafty expedient adopted by the social organism for the purpose of inducing the individual, by the use of all manner of irrational promises and threats, to surrender his private and real interests for the good of the whole. In truth, religion no more than philosophy, or morality, or science, or art, or poetry, can be accounted for on any exclusively social utilitarian hypothesis. All these activities of our higher nature are primarily forms of self-realization rather than of social service, whatever ulterior benefit they may confer on society as well. Religion, indeed, as we shall have abundant opportunity of showing more fully by and by, reveals itself as the activity of an essentially rational principle, moving, on the affective side of our nature, in precisely the same direction and towards the same goal as does the truest philosophy on the intellectual. And if this be so, then, it is easy to see how entirely futile is any attempt to explain it, by restricting its function to the discharge of a sort of police duty on behalf of the interests of the social organism. We will now, therefore, pass to consider another view of religion which though in some respects

¹ “Social Evolution,” p. 112.

² *Op. cit.*, pp. 109-10.

similar is yet in others marked by an important and significant divergence and advance.

The view we refer to is that advocated by J. S. Mill in his three Essays on Religion. In one of these Essays, entitled "The Utility of Religion," he says, "The value of religion as a supplement to human laws, a more cunning sort of police, an auxiliary to the thief-catcher and the hangman, is not that part of its claims which the more high-minded of its votaries are fondest of insisting on: and they would probably be as ready as anyone to admit that if the *nobler* offices of religion in the soul could be dispensed with, a substitute might be found for so coarse and selfish a social instrument as the fear of hell" (p. 95). And so he fully recognizes the reality, as well as the importance and value, of the function of religion as an individual experience, and says with great truth and insight, "that the best of mankind absolutely require religion for the perfection of their own character, even though the coercion of the worst might be accomplished without its aid." Mill is here close on making the great discovery as to what the essence of religion really is, namely, the quest on the part of the finite mind for the perfection of the Absolute. Once more, he intuitively and rightly identifies religion and poetry, in so far as they address themselves to the same part of our nature; "they both supply," he says, "the same want, that of ideal conceptions grander and more beautiful than we see realized in the prose of human life" (p. 103). Further, he defines religion even more exactly, when he says, "the essence of religion is the strong and earnest direction of the emotions and desires towards an ideal object, recognized as of the highest excellence, and as rightfully paramount over all selfish objects of desire" (p. 109). Here, then, he quite manifestly comes so close to the fundamental truth respecting the essence of religion as actually to touch it, but he does not fully grasp it. Had he gone one step further and asked himself the question,

whence is this desire for personal perfection, what is its significance, and how came our emotions to assume this ideal direction, he might have discovered an open road to the Absolute. Unfortunately, however, notwithstanding these distinctly religious tendencies and moods, his mind seems to have been cast in an essentially sceptical and positivistic mould ; and the purely scientific attitude of his intellect towards the whole subject of religion precluded him from the attainment of that freedom of spiritual life which imparts so suggestive and stimulating a quality to the pages of philosophers like Fichte and Hegel. Towards the end of his essay there is a lamentable falling away, and it closes with an anti-climax. The only sphere within which he permits our highest hopes to live and move is that which this relatively insignificant planet, with its transitory interests, provides ; and the only sort of faith in immortality he recognizes as rational is that which, by a strange sophistry in the use of figurative speech, contrives to persuade itself that it can live posthumously in the good works it leaves behind it, and in the life of posterity. Mill holds that any higher destiny than this for man is as vain as it is unnecessary. And so, leaving Mill, we will pass to consider other views of religion that in our judgment offer us far clearer and profounder insight into its real nature and the greatness of its function in human life.

In any survey of religious opinions, however brief, the name of Schleiermacher must always stand conspicuously forth. He was peculiarly favoured by natural endowment for the work of his life, in that he possessed in almost equal degree the capacity for deep feelings and the faculty and impulse of reasoned thinking. And further, as Dr Pfeleiderer has pointed out, " in the pious home of his parents, and in the community of the (Herrnhutist) Brethren, in whose institutions he received his education, Schleiermacher had from the first made acquaintance with religion not as a mere doctrine, but as *an element of*

life, by the influence of which all the other parts of life were penetrated and directed.”¹ In Schleiermacher we have a religious thinker who took his stand on what has been called “the autonomy and autarchy of the moral spirit,” that spirit which looks for its true blessedness, not to what is external to it, not even to what is above it, but to what is within it; the spirit which forms itself according to the law of its own being to a harmonious work of art. Religion thus becomes for him the self-expression or self-realization of our “moral” being, the effort of the ideal to become real in us. His “Monologues” have been termed by Pfeiderer “the triumphal song of the Ego feeling itself absolute.” Of this view of religion we shall have much to say as we proceed. According to Schleiermacher then God is not, as with Deists, a mere deduction of the understanding, reasoning on the world as an effect; nor is he merely the Moral Authority heard in the categorical imperative of conscience; but the absolute Self directly apprehended in immediate feeling. By thus looking to the immediate experience of the divine as the true source of religion as also its true goal, he opened up, as Pfeiderer says, the rich fountain of mysticism, which, though never quite dried up in the churches of the Reformation, yet had never been properly valued and used for the scientific knowledge of religion. There is no doubt that by thus laying down the position that religion must be regarded as a direct apprehension in immediate experience of what is termed the divine, Schleiermacher ushered in a new era in theology and in the philosophy of religion.

Max Müller in his Hibbert Lectures on the Origin and Growth of Religion, presented an exposition of the nature of religion that deservedly attracted the attention of all students of religious origins. It is essentially the same as Schleiermacher’s. Like Schleiermacher, he discerns that the true essence of all religion must be looked for,

¹ “Philosophy of Religion,” i. p. 302.

not in its doctrines or its cults, but in immediate experience. He traces its root principle in the direct apprehension of the Infinite. It is this immediate apprehension or perception of the Infinite that constitutes the germ out of which all the various religions of the world have grown. When he calls our attention to the wistful sense of loneliness and finiteness which makes us long for something beyond our narrow finite self, Max Müller touches, in our opinion, the vital centre of religious experience, and discovers for us the life-blood of religion that flows through all its arteries and veins. In thus referring to the longing of the heart for something that transcends the narrow limits of the finite self,¹ he too, with Wm. James, points to the metaphysical basis of all religious experience; for in the profound yearning of the finite for the Infinite, the Perfect, the Changeless, the Eternal, lies the real essence of religion. The secret of all religion, its true source and meaning, is to be sought in this immediate impulse, this yearning of the human for perfect satisfaction by immediately apprehending or experiencing what we term the Infinite or the Divine. At first the Divine will be conceived of merely as some higher, larger, stronger, or some more enduring life than our own; but in the end will be discerned to be the Infinite or Absolute itself, in whom alone all perfection is eternally real. Such in brief is the view of the religious sentiment one gains from the pages of Max Müller's notable Hibbert Lectures.

We now turn with pleasure to the definition of religion which will be found in an excellent manual entitled, "History of Religion," by Dr Allan Menzies, Professor of Biblical Criticism in the University of St Andrews. In this valuable volume, especially in the introduction, there is contained in our judgment a far more correct account of the essential nature of the religious sentiment than in all the pages of such writers as Herbert Spencer,

¹ Hibbert Lectures, p. 49.

Tylor, or Grant Allen. It is, moreover, an account that, so far as it goes, fully supports the conclusion at which in this study of religious experience up to the present point we have arrived. We shall therefore make no excuse for giving a rather full summary of Dr Menzies' view for the most part in his own words. He begins by referring to the new methods of research which have resulted in our improved knowledge, especially of the religions, of ancient Greece and Rome. But all the other religions, of which we had previous acquaintance, have also been made to tell their stories in quite a new way. Again, the study of the earliest human life on earth has brought to light primitive beliefs and practices, which seem to explain many early religious ideas; and the accounts brought by missionaries, explorers, and others concerning savage tribes still existing in different parts of the world, are now seen to be full of a significance not formerly noticed. With all this new light available to the student of the world's religions, Dr Menzies calls our attention to the superior position in which such a student finds himself to-day compared with that of our forefathers. No longer can we speak as Calvin did of "the immense welter" in which the whole world outside Christianity is immersed. Nor is it possible to believe, with the early Fathers of the Church, that all worships but that of Judaism and Christianity were directed to demons, a belief which practically prevailed till our own day. Such conceptions regarding other religions were natural and hardly to be avoided when so little was known about them. But such ignorance need exist no longer, and consequently the responsibility devolves upon us of forming a view of religion in accordance with the larger knowledge open to us, and the profounder method of study which can and should now be employed. This newer, profounder and more thorough-going method of research is the scientific, and the title given to it in the first instance was "Comparative Religion." The purpose

of Comparative Religion, like that of every other scientific study, is to collect the facts regarding the various religions and to lay them side by side, so to speak, in order to be able to compare them together, with a view to ascertaining what features they have in common and in what particulars they are dissimilar. Thus the first result to be achieved by such a systematic study is the classification of the facts.

Now as in the study of the various animal and vegetable species that people the surface of the globe at the present day, science discovered that inevitably classification pointed to a relation far more vital than that of mere resemblance and difference, and that at last there emerged undeniable and convincing evidence of an organic connection, resulting in the theory of evolution, so also it has been in the case of religion. Scientific research has rendered it no longer possible to regard the various religions of the world as entirely isolated systems, which, though there may be many points of resemblance between them, yet so far as we know may have been of quite separate and independent growth. We are forced, rather, to conclude that there is a very intimate connection between them, that in fact they form parts of one whole. Our science, as Dr Menzies very truly remarks, is in fact seeking to grasp the religions of the world as manifestations of *the* religion of the world. Thus like science in general, the scientific study of religion is seeking to show the unity of law amid the multiplicity of the phenomena with which it has to deal, to gather up the many into the one, or rather to show how the one has given rise to the many. We have thus forced upon us the conviction that an order exists amid the apparent disorder, that the religious beliefs and practices of mankind are not a mere chaos, not a mere incessant outburst of unreason, but that they form a cosmos from which reason has never been absent, and in which a growing purpose has fulfilled

itself, and is still fulfilling itself. The foremost writers on the science of religion are full of this conviction, and in their works aim to show that the religions of the world have a vital connection, and are indeed manifestations in different ways of the same spirit. Thus then the result of the more recent, scientific, better informed, and profounder study of this department of research is to force upon us the conviction of the *Unity of all Religion*.

But another and collateral truth emerges with equal irresistibility, namely, that in religion, as in other departments of human life, there has been continuous growth from the beginning according to the ordinary laws of human progress. To understand anything means at the present day to understand it as a whole, to comprehend it in its entire history, to trace it up to its earliest beginnings, to watch it unfold its significance genetically from germ to maturity. What a flood of light is in this way thrown upon the value and significance of the great institutions of human society such as the family, property, etc., when they are studied in the light of their evolution, when their whole history is traced from their earliest beginnings in social life till now. And even in the case of man's mechanical contrivances, our knowledge and interest are enhanced by regarding them in this light. For instance, we look with a more intelligent wonder on the vessels which like huge leviathans spread themselves over the ocean to-day, when we trace the unbroken line of inventive progress from the coracle or bark-canoe of the savage till it issues in such results as these. There has been no break, to use the illustration employed by Dr Menzies, from the hooked stick of the primitive agriculturist to the steam-plough of modern manufacture. So it has been also with religion. For institutions and beliefs are not things fixed and settled once for all, but things that move, things that have sprung from what was

before and are tending to something yet to be. When we approach the study of religion in this spirit we find that feelings of contempt, jealousy, hatred, and the passions of bigotry and fanaticism are no longer aroused within us, or even possible ; since all the various cults and creeds of the world, however divergent from our own, are discerned to be but different stages in the evolution of the one religion. We shall now no longer divide religion into the true, viz. Christianity, and the false, all the rest ; nor paint, let us add, as used to be done by missionary societies, all the countries of the world black, except the Christian and perhaps the Mohammedan, in token of their utter ignorance of the true religion and their hapless doom, unless perchance that religion be taken to them. Rather will the earlier stages of the development, as Dr Menzies aptly remarks, have a peculiar interest for us, just as we look with affection on the dwellings that were the homes of our ancestors, though we should not ourselves choose to inhabit them now. Even the pit-dwellings, lake-villages, and caves, we may add, where our forefathers sheltered themselves, thus become objects of the deepest interest to us, and are not regarded with contempt. And so Dr Menzies remarks, in a spirit of broad and refreshing charity, that in the light of this principle we shall find good in the lowest, and shall see the good and true, rather than the evil and false, furnish the ultimate meaning of even the poorest. The assumption is, then, that religion, like law, like art, like reason, like everything else that is great and good in human life, has had its history, *i.e.* has developed continuously from its earliest beginnings till now.

What then is it that we suppose has thus been developed ? For it belongs to the idea of evolution that the identity of the subject of it is not changed on the way up, that the germ and the finished product are the same entity only differing from each other in that the

one has to grow while the other is grown. Futile were it, says Dr Menzies, to sketch a history with the savage at one end and the Christian at the other, if it could be said that in no point did the religion of the savage and that of the Christian coincide, but that the product was a thing of entirely different nature from the germ. What then, he asks, do we mean by religion? Now, as Dr Menzies is careful to remind us, an adequate knowledge of a thing which is growing can only be reached when the growth is completed. During its growth it is showing what it is, and its higher manifestations disclose its nature more fully and perfectly than the lower. As, therefore, religion has not yet completed its development, the world has not yet found out completely, but is still in the course of finding out, what religion is; so that any definition propounded at the present stage must be elementary and provisional. Notwithstanding this apology, Dr Menzies seems to have succeeded in giving what we cannot help regarding as a correct and highly satisfactory definition and explanation of the essence of religious experience. He proposes, as a working definition, that religion is the worship of higher powers. Meagre as such a definition at first sight appears, yet if we will but consider what it implies it will be found by no means so meagre as might be thought. For it implies in the first place *belief*; man believes such powers exist. This, says Dr Menzies, is the intellectual factor. Not that the intellectual is distinguished in early forms from the other factors, any more than the laws of grammar, for instance, are consciously distinguished by man as an element in his primitive speech. But something intellectual, some creed however crude, is present implicitly even in the very earliest worships. Without this belief then in higher powers there cannot be any real worship. Dr Menzies thus shows us, that though the essence of religion cannot be said to consist in any particular dogma,

nor in any set of dogmas, yet there must be some intellectual or conceptual capacity to frame ideas of powers greater than his own, or man could not be said to have what we strictly mean by religion. In other words, religion is only possible to a being of sufficiently developed intelligence to be able to conceive of higher orders of existence than his own. Such a being is man. This brings Dr Menzies to emphasize the point that for true worship to exist these powers must be *higher*. It is not necessary that they should be ghostly or spiritual beings, they may be as thoroughly anthropomorphic as the gods of Olympus, but they must be his superiors in wisdom, in power, or in some other essential qualities. Hence religion has respect not to beings regarded merely as on the same level as themselves or even beneath them, but to beings in some way above and beyond themselves; and whom, therefore, they are disposed to approach with some degree of reverence. This is probably the quality of solemnity which Wm. James, it will be remembered, thought accompanied all religious experience. But, once more, religion is not only belief in higher powers, but there must be some form of worship, *i.e.* there must be the cultivating of relations with them, a practical activity continuously directed towards them. But not even yet have we got to the real heart and core, the very essence of religion.

So far we have only discovered that religion will everywhere contain within it some sort of creed or belief, albeit very primitive and simple, some conception of higher powers, and will find expression in some form of worship. But the central question now arises, *viz.*, What is the motive of worship? No definition of religion can be regarded as complete in which the motive of worship is left undetermined. That, says Dr Menzies, is the essence of the matter. The reader will see that here we pass beyond the mere external study of the creeds and cults of religion, to the psycho-

logical conditions from which such creeds and cults arise. Why does man worship higher beings than himself? What is the motive, the impulse, the immediate experience that led him to approach with reverence, love, or it may be with fear, these beings of a higher order? Dr Menzies completes the definition thus: Religion is the worship of higher powers from a sense of need. This, he says, reminds us of Schleiermacher's definition already referred to, viz., that religion is a sense of infinite dependence; and, on the whole, this definition of the German thinker he admits to be substantially correct. The human heart feels its weakness, its finitude, its dependence on powers higher than itself, especially those that preside over or are present in the forces of external nature. But the sense of dependence carries with it, as its essential correlative, some sense of power higher than human, some life larger, more complete than man's with which it is sought to set up definite relations. It is this sense of weakness and the correlative sense of the possibility of larger, stronger life, that leads the human mind to form all manner of conceptions of these higher powers, varying according to the degree of the intelligence of the individual, or the stage of civilization reached by the community. But in all cases there is a belief that the superior powers worshipped are capable of supplying the need and helping the weakness of the worshipper. The incompleteness of his life, and the trials and perils of it, are everywhere and incessantly forced on the heart and mind of man; and this must have been pre-eminently so in those primitive ages, when he in his ignorance had to face the great and mysterious forces of nature upon which his very existence depended, and with which, therefore, there was inexorable necessity that he should establish harmonious relations. His lot was one of mixed good and evil in which there were blessings he could not unaided himself acquire, and in which there

were also terrible perils from which oftentimes he could by no efforts of his own escape. But the belief having arisen, it does not signify how, from ghosts, dreams, or what not, that there were higher powers who could, if they would, assist, defend, or deliver him, what more natural, what more necessary, than that he should strive to enter into relations with these powers in a way that seemed to him most obvious, and seek to maintain such helpful alliance? Hence a sense of friendship and fellowship arose between him and these superior beings, and when this was the case he might be said to have a religion. That is to say, man had come into living relation with a superhuman power, whom he conceives, no doubt, to a certain extent after his own likeness, but nevertheless as greater than himself.

But as the needs of which man is conscious change their character, so also will his religion. The divinities themselves, their past history, their present character, the sacrifices offered them, and the benefits aimed at in intercourse with them, all these must grow up as man himself grows from rudeness to refinement, and from caprice to order. Thus his religion is a sure key to the degree of intelligence, civilization, moral and spiritual growth, to which he has reached. Sometimes the need felt will be private and personal, at other times public and social; sometimes merely physical, and again more moral and spiritual. The needs of the nomad and agriculturist, of the countryman and the citizen, will differ. The savage will not worship as does the civilized European. Yet in all the different stages of its evolution the essence, the spirit, the root-principle, of religion is present and identical throughout. And we have been able to discover what in a general way that principle is.

We have seen that everywhere religion arises from man's feeling of need, of weakness, of incompleteness,

of limitation, and a consequent impulse to surmount it by union of some kind with beings possessed of powers of life higher than his own, of whom in one way or another he has succeeded in framing to himself some conception. This worship of powers higher than himself from a sense of need is thus the essential feature of religion. In all religious experience there is the same immediate impulse in human life to rise above its own feebleness, finitude, incompleteness; in other words, to maintain, to realize, and to complete itself. The highest forms which this effort to rise beyond the limitations of our finite human life takes is seen in the yearning of the most advanced religious minds for the Perfect, the Absolute, the Eternal; to experience it, to be one with it, and, as we shall further see, to express and reveal it. But there is no breach of continuity in the whole ascending scale of religious experience. The same principle is seen at work throughout, from the earliest forms in which it first finds expression in the primitive and savage cults, up to the conscious self-surrender of the saint and the mystic to the will and the life of the All-Perfect and Absolute Spirit.

CHAPTER III

RELIGION AND THE EVOLUTIONARY PROCESS

(I) THE ÉLAN VITAL AND RELIGION

AT this stage of our inquiry a question of considerable importance arises, the full significance of which it is necessary we should now endeavour to grasp, if we would succeed in penetrating still further into the inner mystery and meaning of religious experience. It is a question that naturally suggests itself after the foregoing attempt to ascertain what is the real essence of religion, and it is as follows: Must religion be regarded as something quite new introduced into human nature, as is usually supposed; or is there any germinal anticipation of it discoverable also in lower forms of life? Now the answer to this question, let us say at the outset, must be that religion, the more deeply and thoroughly its true nature and significance are investigated, is not found to represent a principle absolutely new and appearing only for the first time in human experience. On the contrary, the religious life connects itself directly with life's universal striving, a striving towards fulfilment, completeness, and perfection. For it should be borne in mind that there is an effort or struggle of life itself, of life as a whole; and this effort or struggle is by no means exhausted, its final goal is far from being attained, when approximately perfect adjustment of the organism to its external environment is achieved. Rather, as we shall presently see, is the effort of life directed towards a

goal that transcends infinitely such successful adjustment to merely external conditions. For, passing onward and inward and upward, it assumes in man the form of desire and struggle for perfection as inner harmony of being, that is, after self-consistency or self-fulfilment. To express the same thing in other words, life from its very commencement has aimed to complete itself in an experience of spiritual or absolute Perfection.

What, then, has sometimes been termed the religious faculty or instinct, and treated as something *sui generis* and peculiar to man, cannot be so regarded when we gain a deeper insight into its true nature. Religion, we shall discover, cannot be looked upon as the arrival of a principle altogether foreign to the lower life forms and strictly confined to human nature; something, consequently, unrelated to anything to be found in the previous stages of life's evolution. The truth concerning its origin is indeed otherwise. For religion has not come to man from without; it has not descended upon him from above; it is not something mechanically added on to him like a new upper story, superimposed upon the general structure of his animal instincts and intelligence. This conception of a special religious faculty or instinct peculiar to man will have to be surrendered; as also the idea, at one time entertained, that religion originated in the supernatural communication of divine knowledge to primitive man, who as a moral and rational being alone amongst earth's inhabitants was supposed capable of receiving it, but who, nevertheless, without such revelation, would also have remained in ignorance of God like the brutes beneath him. These and all similar *external* views of the nature of religion and its origin must be laid on one side in such an inquiry as the one upon which we have here entered. Such views, indeed, of the arrival and appearance of religion in humanity would not only

be a theoretic error as to its true nature, but would at the same time deprive it of its great value and significance as casting back its interpretative light upon the whole evolutionary process. Religious experience, then, if we would rightly understand its true function in human life, can not and must not be dissociated from the rest of experience. It does not mark an absolute break in life's development, but is in direct and continuous line with the general upward movement and "urge" of life from the time of its first appearance on the planet till now. Religion, then, has not only been continuous throughout all its own evolutionary stages, but is itself in unbroken continuity with the striving of life as a whole to ascend, with what Prof. Bergson has termed the *élan vital*, and is indeed its highest fulfilment. Religion so regarded presents itself as an advanced form of that general movement towards completeness or perfection, which a deeper study shows to be a universal characteristic of life. And so we are able to carry further the truth we learnt from Prof. Menzies. Not only may we say that religious experience, strictly so-called, shows uninterrupted development from its lowest to its highest forms, but also that it is itself really a continuation of life's general "urge" or effort to ascend.

When, therefore, we come to consider the matter carefully we find that the really characteristic feature of life as such, whether religious or otherwise, is this *élan*, this effort not merely to maintain, but to complete, to fulfil, to perfect itself. Richard Jefferies, a genius seldom surpassed in the keenness of his penetration into the deeper meanings of nature, writes thus: "It is evident that all living creatures from zoophyte upwards—plant, reptile, bird, animal, and in his natural state, in his physical frame, man also—strive with all their powers to obtain as perfect an existence as possible. It is the one great law of their being, followed from

birth to death. All the efforts of the plant are put forth to obtain more light, more air, more moisture, in a word more force, upon which to grow, to expand, to become more beautiful and perfect. The aim may not be conscious, but the result is evident.”¹ Again, Prof. Bergson says: “I see in the whole evolution of life on our planet an effort of this essentially creative force to arrive, by traversing matter, at something which is only realized in man and in man only imperfectly.”² This movement or effort towards perfection, which Richard Jefferies detected as present though perhaps unconsciously in individual organisms, and which Prof. Bergson discerns as the main characteristic of the whole ascending scale of life’s evolutionary process, in man becomes self-conscious, acute, imperious, expressing itself in science, in philosophy, in literature, and in art; and again in our social and moral life; but above all in religion, strictly so-called, and more especially in its higher mystical developments.

It is quite evident, then, that a careful distinction must be drawn between these two principles, namely, the mere struggle for existence by the individual organism on the one hand and this profounder élan on the other, a distinction very well brought out and expounded by M. Bergson in his “Huxley Lecture” from which the above quotation is taken. To his thinking, he says, the necessary adaptation of organisms to their environment explains after all the arrests rather than the advance of life, that advance, namely, whereby it becomes more complex and raises itself to greater and greater efficiency. “A very rudimentary being,” he remarks, “is as well adapted to its environment (as are higher forms to theirs), since it succeeds in living in it. Why, then, if adaptation explains everything,

¹ “Nature and Eternity” (quoted in “Life of Jefferies” by E. Thomas, p. 193).

² “Huxley Lecture,” reproduced in *Hibbert Journal*, Oct. 1911, p. 38.

has life gone on complicating itself more and more dangerously? Molluscs such as *Lingulæ*, existing at the present time, existed also in the remotest ages of the palæozoic era." "Why did life go any further," he inquires. "Why, if there be not behind life an impulse, an immense impulse, to climb higher, to run greater and greater risks in order to arrive at greater and greater efficiency?" Now this distinction, between the necessary effort of each individual organism to adapt itself to its special environment and the effort of life as a whole to mount into ever higher forms, is a vital one; and one that is profoundly connected with our present inquiry into the nature of the religious consciousness. It is a vital one, because it quite clearly shows the inadequacy of the principle of natural selection or necessary adaption to environment, taken alone, to explain the ascent of life into continuously higher forms, an ascent which it has beyond all doubt actually succeeded in accomplishing.

If then the admitted fact of life's evolution is to find any true and adequate explanation, account must be taken of this profounder something, this age-long élan of the life-principle itself, which, consequently, is of far vaster significance than merely natural selection, of which so much was expected in the past in the way of explaining the evolution of species. We must, then, have regard, not only to the interests of each individual organism and its efforts to adjust itself harmoniously to its environment, but more especially to this wonderful, this mysterious, but unquestionable, élan or striving of the life principle as a whole through all the long geological ages. This profounder élan, looking infinitely beyond the interests of transient individuals and species, has been and is still, as M. Bergson says, moving to some far off results in man; results which were never within the purpose or cognisance of his remote ancestors, and which he himself does not con-

sciously and deliberately intend. And so it is in this profound, this mysterious élan that the real secret of life's evolution lies.

We conclude, then, in the first place, that the real, the active and creative, principle in evolution must not be sought where in the past materialistic science has so often hoped to find it, namely, in environment. The expression Natural Selection cannot be taken literally. The environment, the physical environment that is to say, does not select. From the standpoint of science the material world must be taken to be totally indifferent as to what forms of life survive, or indeed whether any survive at all. We say from the standpoint of science, because there is a deeper, a monistic view of the universe, by which we are led to conclude that in a sense, foreign however to the scientific attitude of mind, life and its material environment, being both rooted in the same Ultimate Reality, are by no means so alien and external to one another as science, for its special purpose, is obliged to assume. But this profounder view of the relation of mind and matter and their ultimate unity in the universal life, belongs rather to the realm of poetry and metaphysics than to that of science strictly so-called. The environment, then, as such, does not, literally speaking, select at all. We can attribute to it no plans or purposes, and therefore no choices, no preferences or aversions. The air, the sun, the sea, the soil are quite indifferent as to what sort of life they support, or indeed whether they support any at all. Environment is to life no more than the wind and tides are to the fishing smack. They are wholly indifferent as to where the vessel is or where it goes, and as to whether it sinks or swims, or whether it is there at all. They determine, indeed, the tacking movements of the craft; but no one by studying them alone could possibly find out why it is the boat goes into harbour. The real guiding and selecting power is discovered only

within the craft itself in the person of the living sailor, his desires and purposes, who all the while is there by his will managing the boat with a view to the accomplishment of his ends. So it is with life everywhere. The environment, it is true, regulates and determines, but life alone strives, chooses, selects, adapts.

In the second place, since selection by environment, or so-called natural selection, fails to explain the mystery of life's evolution; and again since the effort of individual organisms must be assumed to be exclusively directed towards the maintenance of their own existence and the continuance of their respective species, as biology affirms, and not to the creation of new ones; where, then, are we to look for life's creative effort which has beyond doubt resulted in the continual production of new and ever more advanced types of life? We cannot of course go back to primeval times and credit the ancient protozoa, our remotest ancestors, with having themselves put forth, either intentionally or unintentionally, such vital efforts as that after untold ages, philosophers, artists, poets, mystics, and saints should appear. And yet we must suppose, as vitalists like M. Bergson assure us, that this creative effort was somehow present from the very beginning as an impulse moving towards these far-off results in man. But if so, where, we naturally inquire, are we to look for the evidence that it was there? Now the answer, the only conceivable answer, so far as we can see, is, that its presence must be looked for in the nature of those variations from ancestral type which life presents to the environment for its so-called selection, variations which certainly cannot be thought of as within the scope of the intention or effort of the parental organisms. And so we turn to see if these variations possess any such feature, quality, or mark, as would indicate or suggest the presence within them of this creative effort. Variations ought, one would imagine, to show a distinct

movement of direction towards some far-off goal, some evidence at least of a tendency towards some high achievement, some token that life does not rest content with merely continuing existing species, but aims to produce, or, if you like, to create new ones out of the old. This aim of life, we naturally think, ought to be capable of detection in the range and general nature of life's variations; since it is without doubt only by variations that new species could conceivably be produced. Hence the special interest that has been shown in them and the attention they have received from biologists. Are variations, then, ever of such a character as to suggest an effort to produce new species; and not merely new species, but species of a higher order? In other words does life seem to aim at more extensive adjustment to an ever widening environment both in space and time, and with this wider range to become more complex and yet more harmonious? That is, does it aim at some sort of completeness or perfection? Now the answer to this question which we receive from recent biology is we may say with confidence distinctly in the affirmative.

It would of course be a quite impossible task within the limits of the present chapter to do more than mention a few facts recent biological science has brought to our notice, which indicate the presence within the evolutionary process of this profound élan or effort of life to ascend. And, in the first place, it is important to emphasize the fact that science has of late found itself compelled, after the most strenuous attempts to interpret life by the exclusive application of mechanical and chemical principles, frankly to return to the assumption of a distinct vital energy. Of this return to vitalism Profs. Bergson and Driesch are amongst the most eminent examples. And not only has biological science found it necessary to assume the presence in all organisms of this distinct vital energy, but it has also been obliged to attribute to it a distinct tendency, an impulse, that

is to say, in the direction of greater complication, greater perfection. For the impulse or élan of life is seen to be no merely blind and meaningless activity such as we witness in the tossing of ocean waves or in atmospheric storms and currents; nor is it a useless and uncoordinated expenditure of energy like the vain struggles of a drowning animal. Rather does it disclose a movement of direction; that is to say, we can trace in its variations from ancestral types something more than can be put down to accident or blind chance. We can detect a distinct trend, a controlled activity, so to speak, totally differing from anything that can be assigned to purely mechanical or chemical principles. For a detailed exposition of this vitalistic view of life recourse must, however, be had to recent writers of this school. Here, as we say, we can do no more than point by way of illustration to one or two cogent facts; and our first shall be the remarkable case of the vertebrate eye found in the pecten, a mollusc commonly known as the scallop. The eye of the pecten, says M. Bergson, presents a retina, cornea, a lens of cellular structure like our own; and there is even that peculiar inversion of retinal elements which is not met with in general in the retina of invertebrates. Whence, then, he asks this structural analogy? ¹ How comes it that these organs should present features so remarkably identical on lines of evolution so distinct and divergent? And the answer we receive is that this coincidence must be attributed to some vital impetus, an impetus having from the first a distinct direction which it retains in channels so wide apart and so distant from their common source as are the molluscan and vertebrate types of life. Again, still keeping to the eye, how are we to account for the marked correlation between the variations of the different parts of its structure which must have taken place many times over in the course of its evolution, and where,

¹ "Creative Evolution," p. 66 and ff.

without such correlation, variations would not only have proved useless, but positively injurious and even destructive? In all organic evolution, so we are told, we find growing complexity of structure, but the function remains perfectly simple. What a consensus, then, what a remarkable agreement, so to speak, as to the degree and kind of their variations there must have been over and over again in the course of its evolution, between the different elements of such a complex organ as the eye, for a result to come to pass such as is presented in mammals of to-day? Here again we seem obliged to assume some creative impulse, some controlling factor, determining variations in a certain direction, and regulating their relative proportions so as to produce harmonious or consentaneous results, totally unlike anything that can be explained on a purely materialistic hypothesis. Evidently we have passed over from mere mechanical forces and relations into the kingdom of ends. This same correlation of variations, or variation as it were by mutual consent, can be observed in the evolution of other organs as well as in that of the eye. We cannot avoid the assumption, then, that some creative activity or impulse, some élan, some conation, some purpose—the name is not important if only the fact be recognized—has been at work, the interpretation of which demands quite other and different categories than mechanics or chemistry can supply. It is not, therefore, at all surprising to read in an excellent little manual on evolution, by such recognized scientific authorities as Prof. Geddes and Thompson, that though such variations as mean no more than the increase, the diminution, or the different arrangement of already existing qualities may quite possibly be accounted for on such a theory, say, as Prof. Weismann's, by supposing a sort of struggle for existence in the germ-plasm between the different hereditary items it contains, yet that there seems to be

another sort of variation, qualitative rather than quantitative, where something new appears. What then, these writers ask, can be said as to the origin of these latter variations? How are we to account for the appearance of something new? And the answer they give demands that we descend into profounder depths of life's mystery than can be plumbed by any such theories as Weismann's. The secret, they say, of these qualitative changes lies in the very nature of the organism itself. "It has been a Proteus from the very first; changefulness is its most abiding quality. In short, *the very essence of the creature is its creativeness.*"¹ Yes, most assuredly, we may say, this is the case. We are prepared to assent to the paradox of the "creature's creativeness" on condition only that we be permitted to add that bare change, change uncontrolled, undirected, *i.e.* without distinct aim or purpose, could never be creative. You leave creative evolution still without explanation, you have not entered the kingdom of ends to which life essentially belongs, till you take into your account the real and active presence, within the evolutionary process itself, of some teleological factor instituting and directing such successive changes as shall move to some definite goal, *i.e.* to some far-off result in man.

In further confirmation of this vitalistic or teleological interpretation of the nature of life, it is important that we call brief attention to what is now known as Mendelism. Darwin, it will be remembered, held that the smaller variations greatly outweighed the larger in their evolutionary value. He thought evolution never proceeded by leaps and bounds, but that natural selection pronounced its verdict, as it were, on each small change. *Natura non facit saltum*. This ancient aphorism found almost universal acceptance with evolutionists. But in recent years a serious

¹ "Evolution," by Geddes and Thompson, "Home University Series," pp. 142, 3.

modification of this view has been found necessary. The belief has been continually gaining ground that life, at all events sometimes, takes a leap and a new species appears all at once. In the year 1900 Prof. Hugo de Vries, the well-known Amsterdam botanist, published an account of his experiments and observations on the origin of species in the vegetable kingdom, and the conclusion at which he arrived was that new species arise from old ones by discontinuous leaps, *i.e.* not by a gradual accumulation of small differences. So-called sports, or "mutations," as they are now termed, de Vries maintained are serious factors in evolution, and in support of his views he produced strong and convincing evidence. If his conclusions be sound it is evident that our interest and attention must be centred on the origin of these so-called sports or mutations if we would penetrate the mystery of creative evolution. Are they, then, purely accidental or are they determined and controlled by some force or principle with a view to a large and far-off end in man? Such is the problem set us by mutations.

These views of de Vries receive strong confirmation from what is now called "Mendelism." The word is derived from the name of a certain Austrian abbot, Gregor Johann Mendel, who endeavoured to discover the origin of species in plants experimentally by crossing different varieties of garden peas. He communicated the result of these experiments in a paper of great importance to the Natural History Society of Brünn in the year 1865. His paper, however, remained almost unnoticed till the year 1900, when attention was again drawn to it by the remarkable coincidence, that de Vries in Holland and Correns in Germany had arrived at almost identical results. It is very difficult to give in a few lines a clear idea of what is meant by Mendelism; nevertheless we will endeavour to state as succinctly as possible what this theory is. Mendel

held that in the study of organic evolution special note should be taken of what he termed a "unit" character. A unit character is one that will not blend with an alternate one. For example, his peas were either yellow *or* green, wrinkled *or* round, dwarf *or* tall; but these alternate characters would not blend, they persisted in keeping themselves distinct. That is the first fact to be noted. The next is that one of these characters tends in the offspring to prevail over the other; the prevailing character he termed a "*dominant*," and the non-prevailing character a "*recessive*." It is evident at once that Mendel's experiments afford strong support to de Vries's theory of the origin of species by mutation; since, when a sport or mutation appears in a plant, it can without difficulty maintain itself by reason of this two-fold principle of dominance and non-blending. When a mutation appears, there is no need for natural selection to exercise its determining influence over a considerable length of time in order to bring about stability of character as Darwin thought, for it is fixed by these Mendellian factors from the very first. It is admitted, of course, that no type of life can survive if the environment, *i.e.* so-called natural selection, forbids. The important point, however, for us to note here is that life does not seem to have been content, if we may say so, to move forwards leisurely by almost infinitesimal gradations, but sometimes at all events takes these sudden leaps towards its goal and adopts the remarkable means expounded by Mendel to secure permanently advantages it has once gained. Once more, then, we seem here also to receive the suggestion, if no more, of a distinct impulse or élan in life, an effort to go forward to its goal, and that not merely, if at all, by slow wellnigh indiscernible stages, but by these sudden leaps and bounds.

And now let us for a moment pause to glance at the light the foregoing biological facts and principles cast

upon the evolution of man, and also what further illustration they receive from him. Probably the most important and remarkable of life's mutations took place when offspring possessing distinctive human characters sprang from a simian ancestry. Prof. Metchnikoff of the Pasteur Institute, in his remarkable work, entitled "The Nature of Man," does not scruple to make special application of the mutation theory of de Vries to human evolution. It must be admitted, he says, that certain kinds of organisms at any rate, instead of evolving at a very slow pace, spring up suddenly, and that in such a case nature proceeds with a considerable stride. "It is probable," he tells us, "that man owes his origin to such a phenomenon. Some anthropoid ape, having at a certain period become varied in specific characters, produced offspring with new properties. The brain of abnormal size, placed in a spacious cranium, allowed a rapid development of intellectual faculties much more advanced than those of the original species. This peculiarity would be transmitted to the descendants; and, as it was of considerable advantage in the struggle for existence, the new race would hold its own, propagate, and prevail."¹ And he then goes on to say that this application of the mutation theory of the origin of species is justified by certain facts of a quite remarkable character observable in human embryology, but which it is not, we think, necessary we should here pause to detail. The origin of man would thus seem to be due to the sudden emergence from a simian ancestry of a sort of prodigy or sport. In further confirmation of this view of the origin of man, Prof. Metchnikoff appeals to cases of extraordinary genius which still frequently surprise us in the history of the race. They are met with in families whose previous history contains apparently nothing to warrant the expectation of the emergence of such

¹ "Nature of Man," pp. 55 ff.

unusual powers. There certainly has not been in the ancestry any gradual accumulation of small differences or steady heightening of mental faculty, such as the old theory of the origin of new species would have led us to expect. But with apparent suddenness these radiant powers appear. Prof. Metchnikoff cites particularly the case of the Piedmontese lad Jacques Inaudi, who amazed Paris at the end of the last century by the display of his wonderful calculating faculty. But every case of high genius must certainly be placed in the same category. Life, then, is still advancing towards its destined goal, and the appearance of these great intellectual and other powers from time to time in the race are further evidence of the presence of this *élan vital*, this movement of life towards some far-off result in man.

And now, in conclusion of our brief investigation into the reality of this *élan* of life, let us see its bearing on the whole inquiry in which we are now engaged. Those great geniuses of the religious life that have appeared in all the higher religions of the world and who are known as mystics, whether in India, Persia, Germany, England, or Spain, must also be considered in the light of the mutation theory of de Vries. They usually seem to the non-religious or less developed religious minds as eccentrics, heretics, religious cranks, a sort of spiritual monstrosity even, almost if not altogether unintelligible. But in the light of the foregoing we may now learn to recognize in them a further stage, perhaps even the final stage, in the advance of the *élan vital* towards its end in man. They are in truth, as Dr Inge appropriately terms them, "anticipations of the evolutionary process,"¹ geniuses of the religious type, who, we may reasonably hope and believe, foretold to us the heights to which humanity in the course of ages, may be in a very far-off future, nevertheless in the end, will assuredly

¹ "Christian Mysticism," p. 5.

attain. Of these spirits who represent the consummation so far of life's forward movement we shall have more to say in the sequel, and may therefore now sum up the conclusion at which we have so far arrived.

There is then a vital impulse, there is an onward pressure, an élan of life, still moving towards its goal, *i.e.* towards the attainment of some form of perfection. And religion connects itself with this general vital impulse; and must not, consequently, be regarded as the introduction from without or from above of a principle entirely new into human nature and experience, but merely as an advanced, and in its highest forms as a very advanced, stage of this impulse of life, that is to say of life's movement towards perfection. Thus far then this brief excursion into the realm of biology has brought us in our inquiry into the real nature and essence of religious experience.

CHAPTER IV

RELIGION AND THE EVOLUTIONARY PROCESS

(Continued)

(2) HEREDITY AND RELIGION

IT will be seen as we advance how intimately the subject of heredity is bound up with the scientific, or rather the philosophical, inquiry into the nature and evolution of religion as an immediate experience in the history of the race. A brief consideration of its significance is, therefore, here unavoidable ; as is also a short review at least of the question concerning the inheritance or otherwise of acquired characters, about which so eager a controversy has long been carried on and still continues amongst evolutionists. Now the first point to be noted is that seeing a return to the assumption of a distinct vital impulse has been found increasingly necessary for any adequate interpretation of the phenomena of life as a whole, this inevitably carries with it the implicit acknowledgment of the inadequacy of any purely physiological or materialistic account of the phenomena of heredity in particular. When treating of heredity, therefore, in any attempt to explain its special phenomena, recourse must be had to the psychological or spiritual side of living organisms ; that is to say, we must endeavour to find in some facts or principles of conscious experience the explanation we desire. We conclude then that heredity has its real ground and explanation, not in any chemical or mechanical changes and activities of the germ plasm, not in any merely physiological process, but in conscious experience.

And so just as there is a principle of psychical unity that connects the present with the past in the history of the individual, so likewise, we shall see as we proceed, there must be assumed a principle of psychical unity, still deeper and more inclusive, connecting the present with the past in the history of the race. And just as there is an individual consciousness, so also, we may infer, there is a more universal or inclusive race consciousness. It would seem, consequently, as though we must suppose a sort of racial self, or at least some larger more enveloping consciousness, where the memory of the past is stored and accumulated; a sort of funded race experience, from which the individual members of the race draw, and which we call heredity. And this inherited race experience, we shall see before we have done, has played an essential part in the evolution of the religious consciousness. Hence, as we have just said, the importance of a brief preliminary inquiry at this point into the significance of the phenomena of heredity.

Prof. Ward, in a recent very able and important lecture bearing the title "Heredity and Memory," points out that the real clue to the secret of heredity, its only satisfactory solution, must be found in the facts of memory. Certain fundamental principles, he says, ought to guide us throughout all our biological inquiries. And first, if in the attempt to give a rational explanation of living phenomena you begin with materialistic principles, then you ought consistently to keep to these principles throughout. You have no logical right as you proceed to shift your ground and pass over from the physical to the psychical side. If the laws of matter are asserted to be capable of explaining life anywhere, then they must be shown to be capable of explaining life everywhere. Now it is beyond all reasonable doubt quite impossible to reduce the complex activities of the higher forms of organic life, above all those of man, to

purely physical terms. This has not yet been done, and it becomes less likely almost every day that it ever will be done. And so an increasing number of our ablest scientists, recognizing this, consistently acknowledge the inadequacy of physical concepts to the description of any forms of life whatever, even the lowest. And again, Prof. Ward points out that life forms a continuous and ascending series. No sharp line can be drawn between plants and animals, nor between higher animals and lower. Therefore, in seeking to interpret such a continuous ascending series we must begin where the meaning is clearest, best known, and most definite. Now life is essentially what is technically known as an "anabolic process," or a process of upbuilding; and this implies action contrary to mechanical laws; that is to say, action that does not move along the line of least resistance. Again, such a process also implies direction in the sense of aim or end. In both these respects, then, it stands in direct contrast with the indifference and inertia of lifeless matter. We must, therefore, in our endeavour to interpret life, seek our principle where purposive direction is clear, definite, intelligible. Now of such purposive guidance or direction we have immediate experience necessarily only in the case of our own conscious volition or conative activity; and, consequently, in this our own self-determination we discover the norm by which to interpret that directive or teleological activity which is the universal distinctive feature of life high or low.

Proceeding then on these unquestionably sound principles, Prof. Ward points to the fact that life everywhere implies an organic individual and its environment; and that the activity of the organism is manifestly directed with a view so to adjust itself to its environment as to secure its well-being. Throughout the whole of life, then, the character of value, which such terms as well-being and ill-being imply, has relevancy, but of course

nowhere else. Life is thus the kingdom of values, the kingdom of ends, the kingdom of motives; applied to inorganic lifeless matter such terms become meaningless absurdity and contradiction. This kingdom of values or motives, therefore, and this only, can supply us with the principle wherewith to interpret all life's activities. This effort of adjustment, then, with a view to well-being is undeniably evident in all life-forms from the humblest micro-organisms up to man; and where no such effort is discernible we conclude that there is no life. The range of this adjustment, however, extends indefinitely in space and time; and becomes both more specialized and more complex as evolution advances; yet the motive, the aim, the purpose, namely, to secure its well-being, to satisfy some felt-need, is present as the directive psychical principle of its changing activities wherever organic life is found. But successful adjustment is not attained everywhere in a moment; rather is it the result of a series of trials, attended first with error and failure and then with success; and this, of course, signifies that the organism is learning by experience. And it is thus that habits are formed, however instinctive they may ultimately come to appear. Each successful effort leaves its impress on the conscious side of the organism, in other words it is remembered. And so memory must be regarded as the foundation of habit. And the real seat of this memory, as of course of all memory, must be looked for on the psychical, not on the physical side of organic life. Habit, then, is a species of memory; it is the result of trial and error leading to success. Through successful effort remembered and repeated when occasion again and again calls for it, we learn, as we say, by experience; and repeated experience issues at last in predisposition, instinctive tendency, or what we term habit. It is thus that we must suppose useful habits or instincts are formed by the individual. They

are founded on the original plasticity of life and its power of retention or memory. And so every permanent advance in the scale of life will be found to imply a basis of habit psychical in nature and origin, which has been perfected by practice and embodied in structure.

Now there is a close resemblance or analogy between habit in the individual and heredity in the race. Habit, says Prof. Ward, connects successive phases in the life of one individual, as heredity connects successive stages in the development of one race. And this important analogy suggests the possibility, or at least the conceivability, that the same advance upwards in the scale of life which has been made by means of a succession of individuals such as heredity implies (*i.e.* phylogenetically) might equally well have been due to the effort of a single individual (*i.e.* might have been made ontogenetically), if the single individual had lived long enough and did not grow old. And so in place of the innumerable succession of individuals genealogical ascent requires, let us, says Prof. Ward, imagine one individual as the subject of the whole of it. The final result as regards structure would then be substantially the same, nor, indeed, need the time required be very different. There would, however, be one important difference which it is essential to note, namely, that in the case of the one solitary individual without ancestry, structure would be evidently the result of function and not function of structure. But in the case of the series of mortal individuals where there is a racial as well as a personal history, function necessarily appears, but only appears, as the result of structure. This lucid exposition helps us in this way to see clearly the fallacy that underlies the whole materialistic assumption, namely, that structure originally preceded function; that life, thought, consciousness are all originally merely the product of nerve structure and not its cause or con-

dition. Structure, it is manifest, could not originally have been the antecedent of function, since this would imply that it existed before it was called for. Such an hypothesis, in truth, is consistent only with the old special creationist theory, in which, of course, the various structural forms of organic life, man included, were supposed to have been first supernaturally created and then to have begun to function.

This account of inherited structure and its evolution is strongly supported by the facts of embryology. What does this science teach? We learn from it that each new individual does not start where its parents left off, does not emerge a complete human being from the very first; but repeats in the course of its ontological or individual development, albeit with remarkable brevity and rapidity, that very process which took so many ages to accomplish in its ancestry. This recapitulation, it is true, is not precise and complete in every particular, for reasons sufficiently obvious to biology; yet taking it on the whole it is remarkably full and substantial. What conclusion, then, can we draw from this fact of embryological development? What does this wonderful recapitulation, this repetition of ancestral process, this palingenesis, as Haeckel has termed it, mean and suggest? There is but one conclusion if the attempt at a purely physiological or materialistic explanation has to be abandoned. It suggests and supposes memory somewhere, memory of the nature implied, as we have seen, in habit. But whose memory, whose habit? Not certainly that of the new individual just emerging. Well, then, we are forced to believe it is that of some larger, some more inclusive consciousness, racial memory, to wit, which repeats the acquirements of the past in the construction of the new individual; somewhat as a person who has once learnt carpentry, say, may at any subsequent time construct fresh tables and chairs when they are

called for ; or better still, as a person who has once learnt a poem or piece of music may on any subsequent occasion repeat or recite it. In this way, we are brought to the conclusion that this recapitulation of ancestral process is none other than race memory ; and inheritance as a whole must be explained on the same spiritual or psychical grounds as memory and habit in the individual. But if this analogy between heredity and individual habit holds good, and heredity must therefore be regarded as racial memory retaining and repeating an old story in the new individual ; we are of necessity compelled to a still further conclusion, namely, that some larger more inclusive life, self, or consciousness really exists ; that somewhere there is a great store-house where the past is still retained, as James, Fechner, and other thinkers have held, so that nothing is ever really forgotten ; and that every new individual in the race has access to, or rather is in its structure the result and repetition of, these age-long acquisitions of its ancestors.

This theory of heredity, however, manifestly carries with it, as Prof. Ward observes, the inheritance of acquired characters. If acquired individual characters are repeated generation after generation they may become, so to speak, stamped or ingrained in racial memory. Now two of life's most essential qualities are, as has been said, its plasticity and retentiveness ; by these qualities it is capable of learning by experience and so forming useful habits. This is beyond question true of the individual. But we must conclude that it is also true of the race. Habits of whatever kind necessitated by external conditions and repeated continuously by a succession of individuals in the line of descent, tend apparently to become racial memories, racial habits also, just as they are in the first instance individual memories and individual habits ; that is to say, they become hereditary. In some such fashion we seem

obliged to conceive, for example, characteristic instincts, dispositions, emotions, etc., to have originated and become fixed in the history of a race. That there are such racial instincts, impulses, habits, feelings handed down from generation to generation cannot be doubted. They meet us everywhere in biological science. And we can conceive of no other explanation of them except that they are race memories and habits, acquired more or less rapidly in the course of generations by reason of life's essential plasticity, and retained in some larger more inclusive consciousness or racial self.

And here it is important to note that albeit species, as we have seen, appear to emerge suddenly and in a manner unexpectedly, yet they are not miraculous. All such new departures are from the vantage ground provided by the dispositions and accumulated experiences acquired by ancestors and *in the direction of the advance already made*. The past thus makes the future possible. The future is not something absolutely new, something altogether unprepared for. An oyster, for example, could not produce a whale, nor could an ape give birth to a Plato. Evolutionary strides so vast as these biological laws manifestly forbid. And the mystics, again, those supreme religious geniuses never appear except in the higher religions of the more developed races of mankind. The same is equally true of genius of every description. Poets, painters, musicians, philosophers, etc., never make their appearance amongst the savage or barbarous tribes of the earth. So that it is perfectly clear a considerable accumulation of ancestral experience together with a consequent strong hereditary bias or pre-disposition is more or less necessary as a preliminary to the emergence of all mutations ; and above all must we suppose this to be the case with all the higher ones. The bearing of these important biological facts and principles on the evolution of religion will become more manifest as we approach the close of our inquiry. But what has here been said will perhaps

be sufficient as a biological basis or propædeutic for further advance in our inquiry concerning the essence and the real metaphysical significance of religious experience.

But there is one more important point it is necessary to dwell on for a moment before we go forward. The two fundamental factors concerned in all evolution are first the individual and secondly its environment. Both these factors must be present and must co-operate to produce the result. Let us use an illustration. Suppose a person wishes to get from his home here in the Cotswold Hills to the Metropolis. His movement towards his goal is not determined solely from within, *i.e.* by his desire, but also by his environment. He cannot travel in a bee-line, but must shape his course under control of external conditions. Intelligence other than his own, however, has been at work constructing, according to the nature of the landscape, the railway line with its metals, sleepers, and permanent way, together with the engine and its machinery, the rolling-stock, etc. etc. All these constitute a complicated environment with which the person must bring himself into harmonious adjustment if he would reach the Metropolis. Such or similar, so it seems to us, is the nature of the external universe. It is so constructed as to control and guide life to its goal. There is, if one might say so, some secret collusion between the universe and the *élan vital*, there is co-operation and mutual fitness, arguing some deep unity of which both are complementary expressions, a polarity that points to the unity of the spiritual forces that appear in each. That is why a short while ago we said, that though from the standpoint of science the external world must certainly be regarded as indifferent to life of what sort it is, and whether it persists or perishes; yet, that to the deeper insight of the best poetry as also of the profoundest philosophy, there is between them a wondrous harmony, a mutual recognition and co-operation, suggestive of some ultimate spiritual reality in which both are one. So

that, reverting to an illustration we ventured to use a few pages back, to this profounder view of things the winds and the waves after all do indeed in a sense really desire and intend that the sailor with his fishing-smack should reach the harbour. The winds and tides may thus, with all their apparent indifference or even contrariety, be regarded as really in collusion with the sailor to bring his vessel to its peaceful destination. So we believe in the end that this apparently blind, inert, material universe will be discerned by a more penetrative intuition to be not quite so indifferent to life's evolution as to a superficial view might at first be supposed. Notwithstanding all its deviations, all its tackings and turnings, so to speak, the life-principle is making for a goal predetermined not only by its own nature and élan, but also by the very structure of the external universe to which it seeks to adjust itself. Nothing truer and more profound has perhaps ever been uttered on this subject than by Wordsworth when he wrote saying that his voice proclaimed,

How exquisitely the individual Mind,
 And the progressive powers perhaps no less
 Of the whole species, to the external World
 Is fitted ; and how exquisitely, too—
 Theme this but little heard of among men—
 The external World is fitted to the Mind.—“Recluse.”

But we are justified in concluding that this exquisite fitness exists, not only between the human mind and the external universe, as Wordsworth says, but also between life as a whole and the so-called material world with which at the first glance it seems to stand in such irreconcilable contrast and conflict.

The soundness of the Vitalistic theory and the reality of the élan vital we think we may now justifiably assume to be beyond reasonable doubt. The purely materialistic hypothesis having admittedly failed in its attempt to render an adequate interpretation of the phenomena

of life as a whole, we are left with no other alternative but to resort to some form or other of the theory known as Vitalism. But before we conclude this chapter it is necessary to consider briefly its metaphysical implications.

In speaking of the vital impulse, M. Bergson tells us "it is something that ever seeks to transcend itself, to extract from itself more than is there, in a word to create." "Now a force," he says, "which draws from itself more than it contains, which gives more than it has, is precisely what is called a spiritual force; in fact, I do not see," he continues, "how otherwise spirit is to be defined."¹ Now these are certainly startling paradoxes; nevertheless, if intended as no more than epigrammatic descriptions of the evolutionary process they may be allowed to pass; though it is to be feared M. Bergson intends them to mean a great deal more. Such expressions as, "Extracting from itself more than is there," "Giving more than it has," "Drawing from itself more than it contains," cannot be accepted as in any sense a serious exposition of what the evolutionary process fundamentally is, cannot indeed be accepted as an interpretation at all. To admit their literal accuracy would be equivalent to admitting that creation proceeded *ex nihilo*, a notion we had thought belonged to an old outworn and superseded theology, one with which neither sound science nor sound philosophy could have anything whatever to do. "Creative Evolution" is the title given by M. Bergson to his most famous work; but such a title seems to us to be either entirely misleading or absurd. We have always taken the term evolution as simply designating a process, not a ground or cause. Evolution itself creates nothing, can create nothing. When we say things evolve we do no more than make a summary statement of fact; and to believe in evolution is merely to believe, that as a matter of fact

¹ "Huxley Lecture" in *Hibbert Journal*, Oct. 1911, p. 40.

new and higher species always somehow proceed from species already existing, and are never the products of an independent creative fiat. Evolution is, therefore, no doubt a wonderfully comprehensive scientific generalization; but it explains nothing. It does not tell us why new species appear out of already existing ones, still less how it has come to pass that they have appeared in an ascending order from amoeba up to man. It is therefore rather surprising to find evolution treated as itself creative. There is here surely some confusion of thought. Evolution, in truth, supplies us with no principle of explanation, with no creative principle whatever, it only represents, as we have said, a wonderfully comprehensive fact; but a fact that itself stands in urgent need of rational interpretation. What is said to be "*given*," "*extracted*," or "*drawn forth*" must of necessity be supposed somehow to have been already within, otherwise such expressions would have to be treated as meaningless nonsense. Indeed, we cannot help thinking M. Bergson here affords an illustrious example of what we said in our first chapter regarding the insufficiency of purely scientific principles and methods to render a final or adequate account of any phenomena whatsoever, whether psychical or physical. Vitalism is manifestly a transcendental and not a merely scientific hypothesis; and it is because of its evident metaphysical implications that it has always been so obnoxious to materialistic thinkers like Huxley, and that such thinkers have always so vigorously opposed it. They know only too well whither its admission in the end would carry them or compel them to go. It is the vital principle, therefore, and not evolution that is creative. It is to the nature of this principle we must look for our interpretation of the fact of evolution. And as we trace life's ascent to its highest developments in man, its invincible élan is discerned ever more and more clearly to have throughout profound transcendental or metaphysical

implications; and in the highest religious consciousness, particularly in what is known as mysticism, we see it unfold into an experience which casts an interpretative light over the whole evolutionary process. Therefore such expressions as "the *élan vital*," "an immense impulse," "a spiritual force," and the like, turn out, when their profoundest significance is sounded, to be after all only vague phrases which really introduce into the exposition, though under disguise, that Absolute Perfection which in the long run science and philosophy find they have to admit to be implicit and active everywhere, as the one and only real ground and goal of life's whole evolution.

And now, finally, as regards religious evolution, we may conclude that it is in this immediate impulse or movement towards completeness, in this quest for the Perfect, which, however, is necessarily already implicit within it, that its essential nature really consists. In religion this impulse or *élan* assumes a self-conscious rational form, and expresses itself accordingly in creeds and forms of worship. Beliefs and cults have, therefore, an important, even indispensable function to discharge in the evolution of religion, though its essence lies not in them, but in the immediate impulse or quest out of which they arise. This quest for the Perfect, then, constitutes the real essence of religion. The *élan vital* reaches in religion what might be termed a distinct or discrete degree, a degree or stage marked by the ability of the finite Self to form concepts of divine powers who are able to help it in its effort to overcome its weakness and limitations, and whose friendly aid is therefore sought by appropriate acts which we call worship. In religion we see human nature striving by these means to rise superior to itself, to its finitude, to all the discords and discrepancies by which it feels it is inwardly and outwardly beset. At its highest stages, however, religion is able at length to discover the insufficiency of all concepts to

grasp in its fulness the perfection of the Reality it seeks, and in like manner that ritual forms also are inadequate and superfluous. At this point religion enters upon what is known as the contemplative or mystic stage, where the finite ego seeks to ascend to those heights of experience, where it may immediately apprehend within itself that Perfect Reality, which is at the same time the final goal of all life's effort. And so it is by the light thus thrown back on the whole evolutionary process from such exalted consciousness that we must interpret the *élan vital*, which without such irradiation would be a movement without significance, a struggle and effort with no final goal. Having come thus far, however, the task now devolves upon us to discover and define, so far as we may, what is the nature of that Perfect Life or Experience which we have said is the final goal of the religious quest; and to this task we must address ourselves in the following chapters.

PART II—PERFECT EXPERIENCE

CHAPTER V

WHAT IS PERFECT EXPERIENCE?

(I) THE EXPERIENCE OF A SELF

WE have now to endeavour to state, as clearly and as succinctly as the rather difficult and abstruse metaphysics of the subject will permit, what seems the only intelligible meaning of such expressions as Perfect Experience or the Perfect Life. Our limits will not permit us to do much more than present a bare statement or outline of the principles that go to constitute the essence of such a life or experience; and we shall not, therefore, attempt to enter into a very elaborate defence of our interpretation. We are all the more ready to forego such an attempted elaboration of defensive argument, since we believe we may trust, to a very considerable extent, the self-evident nature of the interpretation itself, to carry its own conviction to any philosophically disposed mind. We are confident, let us repeat, that it will not be very difficult for any one with a fair amount of metaphysical insight to perceive the truth and reality of the principles, their validity and axiomatic character, implied in a perfect experience. And here we would interpose that we use these phrases—Perfect Experience—the Perfect Life—and the Life of the Perfect—as synonymous terms, to designate what is known to philosophy as the eternal or ultimate Reality, in other words, the Absolute.

In the foregoing discussion we have been led to see

already that the Absolute or Perfect is no merely remote and abstract philosophical idea, but is the ultimate and conscious goal of all the higher aspirations of the religious life ; and also that it is implicit in the *élan vital* from the very first. Apart from such Perfection, as a real and operative principle present though implicit in the whole impulse of life, as likewise its goal, the whole evolutionary process, we have seen, would be without any rational interpretation ; we should be confronted with an advance, but to no intelligible end ; with a quest, but with no real object ; a meaningless and futile striving ; in a word, with a manifest contradiction. M. Bergson has said, it will be recalled, that the *élan vital* is moving towards something which is realized only in man and in man only imperfectly.¹ What this something is, we maintain, is manifestly revealed in the highest experiences of religious genius. We are thus enabled to see, even by the results of our inquiry so far as we have at present gone, that there is no need to take the depressing view of the pessimist, who regards the long toil of the life-principle as closing its career in nothingness, like a noble river that ends by losing itself in desert sands ; or to yield to the agnostic's despair of ever being able to discover the ultimate significance of the cosmic process, even if such significance there be. Humanity is not left, we may therefore confidently assure ourselves, to confront the melancholy fate presented to its view by the former, nor is it handed over to the Egyptian darkness by which the latter asserts its destiny to be hopelessly enveloped. Religion is thus of the greatest possible philosophic value, in that it casts its interpretative light on the whole evolutionary process. What then do we mean by Perfection ?

In the first place, it will be obvious that we are carried by such an inquiry far beyond merely psychological processes, beyond the series of ideas, feelings, volitions,

¹ *Hibbert Journal*, Oct. 1911, p. 38.

etc., as psychical events or happenings, into the region of metaphysics ; we have to explore, if we can, the very bases and ultimates of existence. Quite evidently our task is to deal with the final and fundamental, "the over-arching and enveloping," to use Wm. James's expressive phraseology. We have to discover the very nature of the Absolute if Absolute there be. For the Perfect must be Absolute, since only what is Absolute is complete ; there must be nothing more, nothing beyond it, or it would not be final, it would not be *All*. It must be some-how and in some sense all-inclusive, since if there were anything it did not include, what thus stood outside it would necessarily limit it, would reduce it to finitude ; it would be determined by relation to what was external to it, and therefore would no longer be sufficient of itself, complete within itself, it would not be entire. The Perfect, therefore, must be All-inclusive, it must somehow be the All, the Absolute. These principles seem to us quite self-evident.

In the second place, it must be free from all discrepancies, there must be no discords within to mar the harmony of its perfect music. For this reason, again, it must be all-inclusive ; for were it not so it would be exposed to the possibility of its internal harmony being disrupted by intrusion of discrepant elements entering from outside ; and the mere possibility of such invasion would of itself suffice to disturb its peace and with its peace its perfection. The Perfect Life must, therefore, be free from all actual and all possible dissonances, that is to say, from all dissonances which it is not within its own nature as Absolute Experience to harmonize ; and free from them whether arising from within or coming from without. It must be, therefore, an all-embracing and also an harmonious experience.

Again, it must be immediate, that is to say, of the nature of feeling rather than of thought. For what is the essential nature of thought, of thought in the strict

sense of the term, not in the sense in which it is sometimes employed to cover the whole area of mental states and activities? Thought's essential nature is to be ideal, and as such is characteristic of all finite experience. It is an activity of self-transcendency on the part of the finite, an activity to which it is impelled by reason of its finitude. For what is a finite experience? Not something totally separate, totally sundered from all other experience, but an experience in which the Absolute is present but implicit, not therefore fully expressed in its own proper character as Perfection. For the fulness of the Absolute Perfection must be regarded as present in every finite experience, for the most part only implicit it is true, nevertheless as *there*. But the Absolute Perfection not being fully explicit, yet nevertheless in a sense wholly there, comes as from without. There appears to be an aspect, what has sometimes been termed a negative pole of the Absolute, that perhaps never could become explicit or directly experienced by any finite centre of consciousness or self, and yet being present must declare its presence somehow, and so comes as external presentation in the form of what we call the material world. Now thought is just that act of the finite whereby, transcending itself, it seeks to apprehend that of the Absolute which, not being explicit within its experience, appears to come to it, to come to it as from without, to come to it as externally presented. Thought is thus a movement out of finitude towards perfection. Thought, reason, and all logical process, is an effort of the finite to grasp externally or ideally that Perfection which it can only inadequately apprehend immediately or from within. Hence what is termed the ideality of the finite. It will be observed that there is necessarily an ideal element in all sense perception; for perception is distinguished from bare sensation by this self-transcendent activity, whereby it passes out of the immediacy of simple sensa-

tion in order to apprehend what is beyond, what comes as from outside it, as externally presented to it. Such external relations as are thus set up are essentially ideal, and are present in every form of finite life. They constitute the germ whence thought, strictly so-called, is subsequently evolved. The finite then as finite, and yet at the same time with all the fulness of the Absolute Perfection implicit within it, is of necessity moved to this self-transcendent activity, to this effort to apprehend ideally what it is unable to grasp with the directness of immediate feeling. And so thought, idea, concepts, and all the developed processes of abstract reasoning, fall short of reality by the necessity of their own nature; they may be regarded from this point of view as a sort of makeshift or substitute in the finite mind, whose function really is to supplement the inadequacy of our immediate apprehension of the Perfect. It is their nature to have reference to what is beyond themselves; they are symbols of a reality which in themselves they are not. We are here once more at the very heart of the metaphysical secret of the whole élan vital, and touch the real ground of the evolutionary process; namely, the presence of the Absolute Perfection in all forms of finite life without exception moving it to this self-transcendent or ideal activity. But our motive at present is not, however, to expound the metaphysical significance of life's evolution, but rather to show that we cannot attribute thought as such to the Absolute, that is as an element in its fundamental nature. Thought or ideality arises when the Absolute appears under limitations in finite centres of experience; and its presence or immanence in these finite centres is evidenced by their inevitable self-transcendency.¹

¹ We may, however, say by way of anticipation that in the noblest forms of art and in mysticism, Thought and Feeling blend or fuse in a higher, or in what Prof. Mark Baldwin terms a hyper-logical, immediacy, æsthetic in character. See "Thought and Things," by Prof. Mark Baldwin, preface, x.

The Absolute Perfection cannot, therefore, accurately be represented as fundamentally ideal or conceptual, or as of the nature of a logical thought process, but rather as a perfect immediacy, a perfect immediacy revealing itself creatively in the finite, and somehow including all finite existence within itself and including it harmoniously. How this is so, and how we get an approach to a solution of the enigma of creation in the creative activity of the highest human genius, will appear as we proceed. At present we conclude that the ultimate nature of the Absolute Perfection must be regarded as an entirely harmonious all-inclusive immediate experience. It is because such is the nature of the Absolute that religion seeks it as its goal, and in finding it experiences such perfect satisfaction and transcendent joy. Thus, then, the Perfect Life is an immediate experience, an inclusive harmony, a perfect consistency, without any such clash or conflict of incongruous hostile discordant elements as it is not within the compass of its own nature to bring to a state of final reconciliation.

But having come so far in our inquiry into the intrinsic nature of the Perfect, we have now to take another step. We have to ask ourselves in what consists the nature of the harmony and consistency which we have found to constitute the very essence of the Perfect or Absolute Life. What do we mean when we say of anything whatever, that it is consistent, harmonious, that it is without discrepancy or incongruity? The two constituent elements which we have seen to be essential to the Perfect Life are inclusiveness and harmony. What, then, do we mean by this latter term? To the answering of this question we must now direct our attention.

And here we are brought at once to a stage of our discussion when we have to use without reserve the distinctive phraseology of the monistic and absolutist

philosophy. Harmony or consistency always implies "*the One in the Many*," identity in diversity, the unity of manifold differences, the holding together in one of a plurality of experiences and the subduing of them to the unity of one life. In everything that partakes of the nature of perfection in any degree, in every harmonious whole as distinct from a mere aggregate, group, collection, or merely externally related series, in all that we call Good, Beautiful, or True, there is present some one active unifying principle, operative in each and in all of its members, holding them together in such a manner as to constitute them a whole, thus making them the medium through which it realises itself and reveals its nature. In every living organism, in every work of art, in every moral act, in every process of consistent reasoning this organic principle is there. It is the presence of this principle—living, active, creative—that distinguishes what we call life or the living from the mechanical chemical and other forms and activities of purely material things. When we would inquire into the nature of any organic whole we are thus compelled to pass, however reluctantly, into the transcendental or metaphysical realm. It is for this reason, as we saw, that "Vitalism" is essentially a metaphysical conception; and that those who adopt it in their interpretation of biological phenomena find they have passed, in spite of themselves, the strict limits of science and entered more or less into the domain of metaphysics. If, then, we would discover what constitutes the Perfect Life, we must not give our attention exclusively to series, successions, or fluxes, of physical or psychical facts or events, to their merely external relations and classifications; but we must investigate the nature of that non-temporal unity and identity, without which, indeed, such co-existences and sequences would themselves be impossible and unthinkable.

And here we are necessarily brought to seek and to

examine some elementary, some primary and fundamental, form of this principle of the One in the Many with which we have direct and first-hand acquaintance, and which shall be the basis and starting point of all our knowledge. This principle naturally can only be found within our own consciousness, that is to say, in the consciousness each one of us has of his own identity amid the manifold of his changing experiences. We must, it is evident, start somewhere. Where else, then, except in our own self-consciousness can we find the first principle of all our knowledge, and therefore the principle by which also to interpret the nature of the Perfect? And this necessity for a fundamental or first principle will be found in the end to confront all our science and all our philosophy, as well as all our religion, and is the only means by which to escape the despair of ultimate agnosticism. For it is the most certain thing in the world that we cannot understand the nature and essence of religion, that we can reach the ultimate truth of nothing whatever, that in the end we could not have even a pluralistic *uni*-verse, if we ignore or deny the fundamental unity of things. But all unity has its meaning and explanation ultimately only from the experienced unity of the ego or subject *for* whom all the co-existences and successions of phenomena are together and follow one another; for undoubtedly all attempts to find any other available principle of unity have failed, as they must inevitably fail. We take it, then, that this is so axiomatic and self-evident that no elaboration on our part could well make it clearer, or do more than reiterate and emphasize it.

Our thesis, then, is this, that there is necessarily only one direct experience of the one in the many open to us, namely, the unity or identity of our own ego or self amid the manifold changes of its experiences; and that on the analogy of this fundamental experience all our other conceptions of unity are necessarily based. All

that we call things or objects, be they persons, animals, plants, stars, or atoms, all existences or beings we conceive of as unities, not excepting the Absolute Perfection itself, base their intelligibility, so far as they are intelligible to us at all, on this our primary experience of our own personal identity. The identity of all other objects is nothing else than a reading into them, or a reflection from them, of a unity for which our own personal identity supplies the original type or norm. For we can by no conceivable means transcend our own nature and experience so as to comprehend, or form an idea of, that which is constituted quite differently from ourselves. We can, after all is said, understand and conceive that only which in essence is one with ourselves. And in this sense the old adage is profoundly and absolutely true, that man is the measure of the universe.

If, then, what we call our self were indeed but a series of mental states, or were but a mere group, heap, or congeries of ideas, thoughts, etc., according to the English empirical associationist school represented by Hume, Mill, Huxley, and others; or, again, if consciousness were but a continuous stream according to a more recent school of psychologists, without any identical ego, then surely such terms as unity, whole, harmony, consistency, truth, and their opposites would be meaningless; the experiences they represent would be inconceivable in the case of such consciousness as would alone be possible. Indeed, no continuity of consciousness would be possible at all, each state must die as soon as it is born.

In the light of these principles it will easily be seen that such non-metaphysical science as that wherein the attempt is made to give sole being and reality to time, must of necessity always fail in the end to render an adequate or satisfactory account of anything whatever. The flow of time has essential reference to that which does not flow, the changing to that which re-

mains ever the same. To say that there can be such a thing as time which is not experienced by any identical subject which does not flow with the stream, or that there may be duration without there being any identity that endures, is to confer reality on meaningless abstractions. We always in thinking of time consciously or unconsciously posit also some timeless subject whose experience it is. Some ego there must be who is, so to speak, the stationary observer of the on-rolling stream. You might as well assert that you can conceive an *up* without a *down*, an *east* without a *west*, or, as Prof. Ferrier was fond of putting it, a stick with only one end, as to suppose you can have any sort of movement except in reference to the moveless, or that you can have any change except of that which retains its identity. Therefore to us such expressions as the following are, to use a somewhat favourite phrase of Mr Bradley's, meaningless nonsense. "Our life is true duration. . . . It is itself absolute, a flowing that never ceases, never repeats itself, an always present, changing, becoming, now." "Time is real, the stuff of which things are made." "The change is continuous throughout each state,"¹ and so on. Such phrases, we confess, are to us unintelligible. You may try as much as you please to ignore or thrust from your mind the other aspect of reality and concentrate your thought on the flux, as you might fix your gaze on the one end of a stick and try to ignore or deny the reality of the other; but in the end it will be of no avail. The other aspect or term will be there in the back of your mind to trouble you; since it is that neglected aspect which alone lends meaning to the one to which you attempt to give exclusive attention. Your very speech, your very nouns and pronouns will betray you. We must rid our minds surely of the absurd supposition that we can have a

¹ See "Henri Bergson: The Philosophy of Change," by H. W. Carr, pp. 18-20.

coin with only one side. Certainly if you fix your attention on the time-flow you will not perceive the abiding self, just as if you fix your mind on the unchanging self you will not perceive the time-flow. These abstractions represent two opposite philosophical errors—phenomenalism on the one side which says appearances, the time-flow, and its changes are all ; and abstract monism or idealism on the other side, which says reality is the eternal, changeless One, and all else is delusion, mere appearance, *not* reality. If, then, we would interpret reality aright we must rid ourselves once for all of every false abstraction, and not the least of that which is so manifest in the purely empirical school of scientists. We must deal with the whole nature of our experience as it comes to us in all its aspects, taking account both of the transitory and the enduring, if we would discover the intelligibility of anything whatever. But above all must we do so if we would penetrate and interpret adequately the mystery of religious experience.

And so we find in our own self-consciousness an actual, concrete, living type of the one in the many as the basis and starting-point for all our other knowledge of reality. In what is termed the *self*, we have our one ever-present and immediate experience of it. We have and can have no other direct acquaintance with it, and we need no other. It is the adequate and sole source and ground of all our knowledge, mediate or intuitive.

The self, then, is real, not a mere appearance of Reality. We each in his direct experience of personal identity *are* the absolutely and eternally real, albeit under finite conditions and limitations. We are substantives, nouns, pronouns ; and what we mean by the self is real in the sense that it owns all its qualities, all its changing states and activities, as, so to speak, its adjectives. They may pass, it abides ; they are always more or less changing, coming and going ; but it remains ever the same,

ever one with itself. It is not a flowing stream, nor a cluster, a "heap," a group, a collection, nor a series of ideas or psychical events. The past belongs to it as truly as the present, because in a very true, deep sense it is non-temporal, eternal. This unitary aspect of experience, this identity of the self, constituting the very basis and essential presupposition of all the activities of our intelligence, if we deny or ignore it, the world for us must lose its unity, its laws, its order, and its meaning; chaos and anarchy must everywhere prevail. For it is certain all the unities, all the categories and universals by which we lay hold of and interpret existence have their sole source and meaning in this primal experience and conviction each of us has of his own real, unchanging ego mid the flux of time.

And yet the reality of the self has often been vigorously impugned, and that, not only by avowed pluralists and associationists like Hume, Huxley, and the late Wm. James, but also by such an absolutist as Mr F. H. Bradley, in his valuable and well-known book, "Appearance and Reality." In the first part of this work his rejection of the self's claim to be real is as emphatic as it is uncompromising. And yet when we come to consider his criticism carefully, we find it is based merely on abstract, *à priori*, logical grounds; that is to say, he applies as the one crucial test of the self's reality, the purely abstract logic of the logician, not what has been appropriately termed the real¹ logic of concrete experience; two very different things. Mr Bradley tells us that in the metaphysical attempt to comprehend reality we are met with the difficulty that we have to take it as one and also as many, and at the same time to avoid contradiction. But this, he affirms, is impossible, and our attempt in metaphysics to force these inconsistencies together results in open and staring discrepancy. And so on the purely abstract, logical ground of this incon-

¹ See "Thought and Things," by Prof. Mark Baldwin, vol. i.

gruity, the attempt to take the one and the many together anywhere is condemned as only a makeshift, a practical compromise, most necessary no doubt, but none the less in the end most indefensible; giving appearance only, but not truth.¹ This abstract, conceptual logic is applied with no little rigour as a test of the self's claim to reality in particular. This claim is, of course, essentially a transcendental or metaphysical one; and naturally Mr Bradley finds himself confronted with the old familiar puzzle as to the compatibility of diversity with unity. The self, he says, claims to be one and many at the same time, and so is infected with incurable inconsistency. Its claim to reality, therefore, must be disallowed. And even if our intuition of personal identity should turn out to be a fact, it would, he affirms, nevertheless be of no avail; because what we want in philosophy is something more than mere intuition, we want to *understand* both ourselves and the world; and merely to have intuition of our personal identity is, of course, not to *understand* it.² But seeing we cannot avoid taking the self as many and yet also as one, if we go on to assert reality of it we are faced immediately with this hopeless discrepancy, a discrepancy, that is, which our logical or discursive understanding is incompetent to resolve. Mr Bradley therefore concludes that the self is no more than a construction of thought, or, as he terms it, an ideal construction—appearance only, not reality. If, then, its reality has to be rejected, necessarily it cannot be regarded as containing any disclosure of the ultimate nature and truth of things; and so in our personal identity he will not admit we possess a first principle whereby to comprehend reality whether in ourselves or in the world at large.

Now our main reason for referring in this connection especially to Mr Bradley is, that he affords perhaps the

¹ "Appearance and Reality," pp. 33-34.

² *Op. cit.*, pp. 107-8.

most illustrious instance of the failure on the part of a really great metaphysician to make the distinction above referred to between the mere logician's logic and the real logic of concrete life and experience, with the consequent ruin and confusion to his metaphysics such failure inevitably entails. It is, of course, quite evident that if I affirm there is only one man in the street, I am not at liberty to assert at the same time that there are many. But this, we maintain, has nothing whatever to do with the question whether the self does not remain one and identical with itself amid its diversified changes and activities. The first is purely a question of conceptual logic and consistency; the second is concerned with the real logic of concrete experience. Abstract logic no doubt has to do with the incompatibility of the two concepts—one *and* many; but concrete logic has to do with a totally different matter, namely, the possibility and reality of the one *in* the many. The distinction here between the conjunction and the preposition makes all the difference in the world, and for metaphysics is a vital one. For if this merely *à priori* logical criterion of truth is to be held valid as against the self's claim to reality, by parity of reason it must be held equally valid against Mr Bradley's own view of the Ultimate Reality as the one, all-inclusive, perfectly harmonious experience. The result must necessarily be the triumph of the whole array of pluralists and sceptics, the legitimate descendants and followers of Locke and Hume, who not only reject the transcendental reality of the self, but consistently deny the reality of the Absolute as well. The futility of this merely logical objection to the reality of the self could, however, scarcely be more effectively exposed than by Prof. Pringle-Pattison in his excellent review of Mr Bradley's book.¹ And we quote from this review, not only because of the convincingness of its reply to Mr Bradley's

¹ "Contemporary Review," vol. lxvi.

criticism, but also because of the force and clearness with which it supports the view of the self we have given above.

“According to the well-known brochure,” Prof. Pringle-Pattison facetiously remarks, “if water choke us, what shall we drink? If our own existence is unintelligible to us, where are we likely to find intelligibility? If the One and the Many are absolutely incompatible as they have been represented (*i.e.* by Mr Bradley), how are they to be brought together at all?” He then defends the claim of the self to reality as follows: “The fundamental nature of experience may enable us to explain derivatively any special feature of experience; but that fundamental nature itself must itself be learned from experience and simply accepted. Now I maintain that unity in multiplicity, identity in diversity, is just the ultimate nature of universal experience. Such a unity or identity is lived or experienced in every instant of self-conscious existence; and it cannot be other than a misleading use of language to speak of our most intimate experience, the bed-rock of fact, as unintelligible or contradictory. The whole procedure of thought belies such a supposition; for, instead of stumbling over this unity and identity as unintelligible, we proceed to make it the measure or standard of the intelligibility of everything else. The thing and its qualities is a mere analogue of the self as many in one; all our terms of explanation, all the categories of thought, are drawn in like manner from the life of the self.”

Nothing, we think, could well be clearer or more self-evident than this concise statement of the self's fundamental reality. And Prof. Pringle-Pattison goes on to show how indeed Mr Bradley himself when he comes, in the second part of his book, to discuss the nature of the Absolute, is obliged to cast aside the critical method he employed so trenchantly in the first part against the reality of the self, and to say, as he does, that “If you

will not assume that identity holds throughout different contents, you cannot advance one single step in apprehending the world. There will be neither change nor endurance, and still less motion through space of any identical body; there will be neither selves, nor things, nor, in brief, any intelligible fact, unless on the assumption that sameness in difference is real.”¹ What is rejected by Mr Bradley as essentially unintelligible in the first part of his book is thus adduced as the very first principle of all intelligibility in the second part. We take it, then, as not seriously to be disputed, that in the consciousness of our own personal identity we have a primary and fundamental fact of our nature, the one but sufficient source of all the principles, universals, categories, whereby we seek to understand universal existence.

Leaving on one side, then, this purely abstract, logical objection to the reality of the self, let us observe, in further confirmation of what we have said concerning its nature, that we cannot pronounce a judgment on the reality of anything else, except by virtue of the implicit presence and activity within the judgment of this unitary self. Our own essential unreality would, therefore, surely be the strangest of all possible grounds on which to take our stand in proceeding to affirm or deny the reality of anything else. Indeed, to deny the self's reality is by implication to affirm it. For how else, except on the ground of the direct and assured experience we have of our own reality, by presupposing it and using it, can we proceed to affirm or deny the reality of anything whatever, ourselves included? If we ourselves are unreal, mere appearance, ideal constructions, and so forth, it is impossible to conceive how we ever came to form any idea at all of what it is to be real. In fact, the self, its unity and its fundamental character, are implied in Mr Bradley's own criterion of truth, namely, that reality does not contradict its SELF; which

¹ *Op. cit.*, pp. 347-8.

is the same thing as to affirm that reality is a Self, and that you must not try to make two incompatible predicates meet in one Self, for if you do it will disclose and assert against you its fundamental unitary nature, which refuses to accept ultimate incompatibilities, by repelling your attempt. In truth the only conceivable thing that could possibly be dissatisfied with and reject inconsistency is, after all, a unitary Self. This also we think quite self-evident and axiomatic.

Reality, then, everywhere in all its aspects is of necessity thought of and treated as a *Self*. Thus we speak of the sun, its *Self*; Sirius, its *Self*; the sea, its *Self*. And we speak in the same way even of abstract qualities, as, for example, love, its *Self*; truth, its *Self*; virtue, its *Self*. We shall be told, no doubt, that such language must not be taken literally, that it is only personification, and therefore of no philosophical significance. We answer, such language may be figurative, but it is at the same time metaphysically inevitable, because whenever you think of anything as one and identical, no matter what it is, mental or material, you can so think of it only in terms of the Self; that is, by attributing to it a Self, by treating it as a Self; otherwise you would have no subject about which to form any judgments at all. For the more carefully you consider the matter the more evident it becomes, that the only subject about which you can predicate anything is, or at least must be conceived of as, a Self. The reality of the identical self of which we each have a direct experience is therefore essential and fundamental to all thought and to all knowledge. Let any one try to think of anything whatever as a unitary being, and he will find he can do so only on the analogy of that unity of which he has direct acquaintance in himself. Whatever, therefore, exists, or is conceived to exist, as a separate being, whether animate or inanimate, can be thought of only under the form of a self.

In this direct, intuitive knowledge each of us has of his own personal identity, and in this alone do we possess the key wherewith to solve the problems existence everywhere offers us, even that of the Absolute itself. Whence things are, what they are, whither they are tending—all such questions we shall find ourselves powerless to answer unless we look within and inquire first what our own essence is. Not by endeavouring first to scale the heights and sound the depths of the so-called material world can we discover reality, for it is nearer to us than our own breathing, closer than our hands and feet; it is, in truth, our deepest, innermost Self. And so it is in "*Selfhood*" we must look for the world's reality and for the truth of all it contains. By this we mean that in the Self as one yet manifold, as unity in diversity, we possess that metaphysical first principle which constitutes the foundation upon which the whole structure of the universe is built. If, then, we would know ultimate truth and reality, there is only one way open to us, we must begin with the knowledge of Self.

Nowhere, we believe, has this been more convincingly demonstrated than by Prof. Trumbull Ladd, of Yale University, in his well-reasoned work entitled "*A Theory of Reality.*" We would call attention to Prof. Ladd's work here because it seems to us that its exposition of what is meant by the One in the Many, or the fundamental unity of things, is a notable advance upon Mr Bradley's in his great work, "*Appearance and Reality,*" and because, moreover, it marks a distinct step in Western metaphysical thought towards that profounder insight and comprehension of the nature of the Absolute hitherto associated with the East, particularly with the religious philosophy of India, in what is termed the Vedanta. It is not possible within our present limits to do more than call passing attention to the powerful defence it contains of the reality of the

Self. Briefly summarizing Prof. Ladd's conclusions, we may say that as against all those sceptics or agnostics who from Hume to Mr Bradley have denied or called in question the Self's reality, treating it as no more than a "heap," collection, or series of ideas, perceptions, and psychical events, or as a mere stream of consciousness, Prof. Ladd affirms that all psychic phenomena necessarily imply a self or ego as their common subject, and that the distinction between reality and appearance is valid only as a distinction between the Self and its conscious states.¹ And again, other things, he says, are known or conceived as remaining somehow identical, while being subjects of more or less important changes, only after the analogy of the identity that belongs to the self.² As to the categories, those essential forms of knowledge under which we perceive and conceive of all we call real, they also have their source in the Self, they are in the first instance forms of being under which we know the Self; and their application to other objects of knowledge to what we call the *Things* of the world is secondary and derivative. And, finally, he does not scruple to affirm that by knowledge of the Self we may attain an intuitive penetration to the very heart of Reality. The unity of the world, the Ultimate Reality in which all things and all minds have their being, is known in terms of an all-inclusive and Absolute Self.³ Such, in briefest outline, is the view of the nature of Reality presented in Prof. Ladd's invaluable treatise. The Ultimate Reality in his philosophy is a perfect, all-inclusive Absolute Self. To sum up then. The Ground of the universe, the Ultimate Reality, if it is to be conceived of as a unity at all, not only may be, but must be conceived of as a Perfect or Absolute Self. And there is nothing that stands in the way of our so regarding it except the prohibition of a purely abstract logic. There is therefore no need to take up an agnostic attitude

¹ "Theory of Reality," pp. 42, 43. ² *Op. cit.*, p. 155. ³ *Op. cit.*, p. 109.

towards it, such as that assumed by Sir Wm. Hamilton, Dean Mansel, and Herbert Spencer in the last generation, and to call it The Unknowable; or even to say, as Mr Bradley repeatedly does, that certainly in the end, to know how the One and the Many are united is beyond our power; but that in the Absolute, we are convinced, somehow the problem is solved.¹ If we will foolishly throw away the key when we have it already in our hands, then certainly the nature of the Perfect or Absolute will appear an insoluble mystery. To block up the one door by which we are able to gain an entrance into and enjoy the light and warmth and comfort of home, and then to proclaim that it is our fate to remain without in the darkness and cold, this surely is a perverse procedure. Our essential nature, we may rest assured, does not betray us. And we may therefore confidently believe that what is so fundamental and so inescapable in our mental constitution as the unitary Self, is no illusion, no mere appearance or ideal construction; but that in this intuition of our personal identity we have the surest evidence that not the whole of our being belongs to the flux of time, that we are not altogether finite and fleeting; but that in one aspect of our complex nature we are transcendental. By virtue of this aspect, moreover, we are citizens of Eternity, and as such may claim not merely kinship but identity with that Absolute Perfection whose fundamental nature we are now endeavouring to ascertain.

We conclude, then, that the Absolute is a Self, and that we also are selves; and that it is only by reason of our own reality as rooted and grounded in the Absolute Self that knowledge is possible to us at all, whether of ourselves or of anything else. By further inquiry, therefore, into what is a self, we shall be able still more clearly to ascertain what is the essence of religion and what the goal of its quest.

¹ "Appearance and Reality," pp. 160, 203, etc.

CHAPTER VI

WHAT IS PERFECT EXPERIENCE?—(*Continued*)

(2) THE EXPERIENCE OF A SELF WITH A NATURE UNDERIVED

LET us now make further inquiry as to what we mean by a Self. To say it is the One in the Many, unity in diversity, is still too vague and abstract. We must "thicken" our notion, as Wm. James would say, if it is to be at all adequate to reality. What further, then, does our consciousness disclose as to its nature? That the self is a unity we have seen already. But it is not a bare one, it is not an abstract unity without contents, something outside and beyond the series or flow of psychic happenings. It is something that lives in and through them all, as their source and ground. This unity, this identical Self, then, is the fountain, so to speak, whence issue, either spontaneously or upon some external stimulus and appeal, all those flowing experiences, those sensations, emotions, thoughts, and volitions that make up our psychic life. These all somehow issue from the ego, evoked or unevoked they come from its depths and reveal what we term its nature. The self, then, is a unity with a nature. By saying that the self is a unity with a nature we mean there is implicit within it that which on occasion it reveals, potencies that are or may become active, giving appropriate expression to themselves in some outward form. The self in each of us is, we know, a great deal more than is manifest at any one moment. There are a thousand forms our experience may and does assume at different

times, whilst we remain as selves or egos identical through them all. But our experiences, our activities, do not spring out of nothing, nor are they given to us from outside; they come forth from us, they are ourselves under these conditions, in these states, acting in this or that particular manner; they are our revelations of ourselves, *i.e.* they manifest our nature. This is what we mean when we speak of a loving nature, a proud nature, an irascible, cruel, or artistic nature. We do not, of course, mean that we are actively loving, or angry, or proud, or creative all our time. These streams, if we like so to call them, are not always flowing. We mean that there are tendencies, possibilities, facilities in us, that on occasion reveal their presence; and these, our dispositions or proclivities, as we call them, constitute our characteristic temperament or nature.

Each of us, then, is a self with a nature. But further, it is also a nature which develops. All our activities, all our experiences, all the changes we pass through as we grow from infancy to manhood, and through manhood to old age and death, are expressions or revelations of our nature. Nothing in the process of our development comes to us from without, except, as we have said, certain stimulations and appeals to which our nature responds. No appeals however importunate, no environment however propitious, would ever have any developmental effect upon us unless we had a nature fitted to respond, any more than the most moving oratory, or the sweetest strains of music, would call forth any answering appreciation from a stone-deaf man or a corpse. The self, then, is an active, developing principle; and the whole course of its development constitutes a process wherein it reveals or realizes its nature. Such is the self as we discover it by reflection on our own self-consciousness.

This conception of a unitary self with its nature, which we thus get from reflection upon our own experience,

supplies us with the key, the only, but, we believe, the sufficient key, to the interpretation of life everywhere and as a whole. That is to say, we have to credit every form of life with a conscious unitary principle or self, possessing a certain nature. To live is essentially to grow; and in all growth there is a unitary principle with certain potencies, an identical principle, that, whilst it remains one with itself, giving continuity to the whole developmental series of changes, yet progressively discloses its original nature. This process advances till at last the self has fulfilled its destiny, the life-history of the individual is complete, its full meaning unfolded, its entire nature revealed. The cell, for instance, out of which develops the full-grown lion, eagle, or man, we say possesses a certain nature. There is an active principle present in it that, though it will remain one with itself through all the long chain of its progressive transformations till the complete creature is there, yet produces from beginning to end nothing that was not implicit from the first. And this active principle we call a self with its nature, and the whole developmental process is a process of self-realization or self-revelation.

The foregoing reflections bring us face to face with the great enigma of evolution, the real riddle of the universe, namely, How can you say anything is only implicit? If it is *only* implicit, is it there at all? And if there, how is it there? But if there implicitly, then surely as it is there you have it already. Why, then, all this ado, why all this evolutionary struggle of life to gain what it already has? Why this élan, this age-long effort to reach a goal which it is admitted is already within? Mr Bradley, in his "Ethical Studies," tells us evolution is a contradiction. "That which develops or evolves," he says, "both is and is not. It is or it could not be *it* which develops and which at the end has developed. It is not or it could not become. It

becomes what it is ; and if this is nonsense then evolution is nonsense.”¹ Now how are we to solve this neat little bundle of paradoxes ? There were formerly those who held what was known as the pre-formation theory of development, which sought to escape the above dilemma by saying that in the germ there is already a complete human body with all its parts and organs. All that development, according to this theory, means is, that when the germ is provided with food and other necessaries it grows larger and larger till full maturity, that is, till it attains the normal size of its species. Theologians, we believe, made an application of this theory peculiarly their own. They held that all the human race were already microscopically present in the loins of Adam when he committed his first transgression, and that we can, therefore, since we were all present at the time, in a sense be justly credited with complicity in his offence, and can have imputed to us his guilt.² Such a crude conception of evolution, however, biological science has of course made impossible. How, then, are we to avoid this fallacy of the implicit, which says a thing is both there and not there at the same time ? The real clue that will lead us out of our perplexity is to be found in what we have so far seen regarding the true nature of the self, further elucidated by what we have learnt from Prof. Ward on heredity.

Each germ of life we must suppose has within it a self with a nature, and that its so-called potentialities are what they are by reason of its ancestry. The forms of life on the earth to-day are, we know quite well, not original ; they have had a long evolutionary history. From the élan of life as it has already taken definite shape in their ancestors, and which now appears in them, they derive what we call their powers and capacities, or, as we also say, their nature. This is what is meant by the doctrine of descent or heredity. The germ or

¹ “ Ethical Studies,” p. 174, note.

² Comp. Heb. vii. 4-10.

self of the oak strives to become an oak, because the *élan vital* in its ancestors has taken this special direction. The individual oak is not an original and purely self-determined being. It inherits an ancestral impetus; that is to say, it has as its distinguishing feature the special conation that has been passed on to it from the long line of its ancestors, in whom more or less gradually it assumed the present form. Thus all the individuals of each species may be said to have the particular *élan* of the species in them; the germ of a fish will become a fish; the germ of a swan will become a swan; the germ of a lion will become a lion; and that of a human being will become a man. In each case its special *élan* is present as an immediate impulse, an active, creative feeling; and this is what we mean when we speak of the *nature* of the germ. When, therefore, we say that a germ has such and such a nature, which in the course of its life-history develops, it is to this impulse, to this creative feeling, we refer. This, then, is the real meaning of the statement that the oak is implicit in the acorn, the chick in the egg, and so on. Every form of life has a principle of unity or identity in it, is of the nature of what we call a self. It is one and the same throughout the whole course of its evolution, as we experience ourselves to be one and the same, or identical, amid all the variety of our own changes and growths. And what we call its nature is the special *élan* or developmental impulse it has inherited from its ancestors. It is, as we have seen, race-memory repeating in the organism a well-remembered story. But this naturally suggests once more the question: Is there anything that we may legitimately call a racial self corresponding to what we know as the unitary subject in the case of the individual? And to this question what we know of the nature of the self through our direct experience helps us to an answer.

In his very stimulating and suggestive work, entitled "A Pluralistic Universe," to which in the sequel we

shall have to return, Wm. James has an interesting and important chapter on Fechner, in which, on the analogy of what we each intuitively know to be the nature of the self, the possibility of a larger and more enveloping consciousness is discussed. Fechner held that there is a series of enveloping consciousnesses, each wider and more inclusive than the other, proceeding outwards as it were, till at last you come to the all-containing Absolute. The more inclusive forms of consciousness are in part constituted by the more limited forms. And yet these more inclusive forms are not to be conceived of as merely the sum or aggregate of the more limited. Our own mind or self is not the bare sum or aggregate of our sights plus our sounds plus our pains. In adding all these terms together our mind finds relations among them, and weaves them into schemes and forms and objects of which no one of these senses in its separateness knows anything. Now it is just the same with the wider consciousness, according to Fechner's theory "the earth soul," which includes within it all our separate selves. It traces relations between the contents of my mind and the contents of yours of which neither of our separate minds or selves is conscious. It has schemes, forms, and objects proportionate to its wider field, which our mental fields are far too narrow to cognize.¹ This profoundly interesting speculation of Fechner's James accepts in the main as true, though rather arbitrarily to our thinking, and under stress of his anti-monistic bias he rejects Fechner's inevitable conclusion, that there must be an ultimate, all-inclusive, absolute consciousness. "We must suppose," says Fechner, "that my consciousness of myself and yours of yourself, although in their immediacy they keep separate and know nothing of each other, are yet known and used together in a higher consciousness, that of the human race, say, into which they enter as con-

¹ "Pluralistic Universe," pp. 168, 169.

stituent parts.”¹ Since Fechner’s time, as Wm. James reminds us, abundant confirmation of his views on subliminal mental activities and processes have been forthcoming from scientific investigations into the phenomena of hypnotism, telepathy, veridical hallucinations, and from the whole realm of so-called psychical and mediumistic phenomena. Whether, then, there is a series of such wider consciousnesses as both Fechner and James suppose, reaching out at last, according to Fechner, to the all-embracing Absolute or not, we must suppose that there is at least some one more inclusive life and experience than that of the individuals of a race, in which the past is stored and remembered, to reappear in them as their hereditary impulses and qualities. For ourselves we share Fechner’s view, as we shall have further occasion to observe when we come to speak more particularly of the evolution of the religious consciousness. We do not, so we hold, pass directly from our private and individual experience to that of the Absolute as such, but ascend through various stages of ever more inclusive race experiences before attaining the culmination of all consciousness in the direct experience of the Absolute’s own perfection. But first or last the Absolute is there awaiting us. Either immediately we pass through the gate of our individual consciousness into a wider life, or after passing through a series of intermediate consciousnesses, sooner or later we reach a stage when the finite finds exit from all limitations, whether in its own experience or in that of the race, by direct entrance into the Life of the Perfect.

By this discovery of the real existence of some larger and more enveloping experience than that of the individual members of which a race is composed, we are enabled to escape the contradiction which the idea of evolution seemed at first to involve, and at the same

¹ “The Pluralistic Universe,” p. 155.

time to "thicken," as Wm. James would say, our conception of the self. What we mean by the nature of the germ which unfolds and reveals itself in the course of individual developmental history, is the presence within it of an immediate impulse which represents the past as still retained in the memory of a larger and more inclusive consciousness, and repeated like a well-learned and well-remembered tale in the ontological history of each new member of the race. When we say, for instance, that the oak is implicit in the acorn, all we mean is that life is beginning to tell once more an oft-repeated ancient story. And if evolution is a contradiction, so are all memory and all habit equally and for the same reason contradictions. But we can now see that the apparent paradox vanishes when we abandon our merely *à priori* abstract logic as the one criterion of what is possible or real, and have recourse to the concrete facts of experience given in the self with its nature.

We cannot, however, interpret in this manner the evolution of life as a whole; since the *élan vital* cannot, of course, be said itself to be repeating an old story if you take into account the entire evolutionary process from primitive unicellular organism to man. The principle of palingenesis or recapitulation can only be applied ontogenetically—that is, to the explanation of individual development, not to the *élan* of life as revealed in the process of evolution as a whole. Taking into account the whole range of life, not only are old stories told, but new ones would seem to be learned and repeated; in other words, new species appear and new experiences arise in consciousness. Evolution means the constant appearance of what is new both in the forms of organic life and also in consciousness. Whence, then, is the new derived? Is the new absolutely new, as M. Bergson and his school would have us think? That is to say, is there such a thing as creation *ex nihilo*? Those mutations of which we treated in a former chapter, are

they really and in the strictest sense the most genuine of miracles? For you cannot escape attributing the essentially miraculous to nature by merely saying the new proceeds out of the old, if the new were in no sense already there. We have all seen a conjurer perplex and yet delight his audience by producing all manner of objects, animate and inanimate, out of an apparently empty hat. Is nature, then, such a conjurer's hat? It is impossible to think so. As we have already said, neither sound science nor sound philosophy can admit the absurd supposition that anything absolutely new appears anywhere or under any possible conditions in the universe. In the end, such is our contention, thinkers of the type of M. Bergson will have to postulate in spite of themselves some Absolute Experience—that is, some Perfect Self of which the whole evolutionary process is an expression. This Absolute Self will, of course, possess a nature, but it will be a nature eternal and underived. And it will be an essential feature of its nature to manifest itself, and the whole cosmic process will be its self-revelation. Such a Self, with its perfect underived nature, seems, then, demanded as a metaphysical necessity if we are to have a rational explanation of the evolutionary process. And such a Self is what, we maintain, the universe, when most profoundly regarded, actually discloses. Whatever appears, then, no matter how new it may seem to us, cannot be regarded as absolutely new, but only as an appearance under finite form and finite conditions of the one perfect Reality. Just as, for instance, the song that expresses the soul of the singer, or the musical notes that express the soul of the musical composer, are not to be deemed creations out of nothing, but may be said with truth to be contained already in the immediate experience which unfolds itself, *i.e.* expresses or reveals its nature, in them; so neither in the case of the Perfect Self can those evolutionary forms and progressive ex-

periences in which its nature is expressed and revealed be said to be strictly new creations. We are not only justified therefore, but metaphysically compelled to postulate a supreme and ultimate type of the One in the Many, namely, the one Perfect Self identical in all the multitudinous and complex forms of its progressive manifestations. To create, then, is not a bare miracle, it is not an unthinkable absurdity ; nor is it a process so vastly different from any activity of which we ourselves are conscious that we can form no possible conception of what its nature is. To create is to manifest or to appear, and in some degree this activity is characteristic of every living thing, of every self, from the self of the one-celled organism to that of the highest genius in man. To say that all things before they appear are somehow contained in the nature they reveal is not to utter unintelligibility ; and to affirm this of the Absolute is only to trace a principle which is the characteristic and distinctive feature of all conscious life to its highest exemplification in the perfect Self. The Absolute, then, is present in all its appearances, and all its appearances are necessarily in the Absolute. And when we read about creative evolution, we can only interpret the expression metaphysically to mean, that in the evolutionary process we have an ever-advancing revelation of the nature of the Absolute Perfection which is immanent throughout the whole series from beginning to end. We do not, however, pretend for a moment that there are not many and great difficulties still remaining, that there are no apparent paradoxes yet to be resolved. But we see no reason for thinking, with such a view of the evolutionary process, they are finally irresolvable. Rather may we entertain a well-grounded hope that with clearer and more penetrative intuition than perhaps is possible to us at present they also would pass away.

In this all too brief and fragmentary a fashion, still not we hope without carrying some measure of conviction to

the reader's mind, we arrive at our conclusion as to what a Perfect Experience is. It is an all-inclusive, completely harmonious, immediate Experience. In other words, it is a Self with a perfect nature underived. And further, it is of its essence to disclose that nature like genius in innumerable and infinitely varied self-revealing activities ; and the whole evolutionary process is but a progressive manifestation under finite forms and conditions of the nature of this Perfect Self. This, then, is what is meant when we speak of Perfect Experience or the Perfect Life, in one word, Perfection. Before we close this chapter, however, some outstanding difficulties and questions which confront us, as arising naturally out of the preceding exposition, must be noticed. Many others we have to leave on one side for the present as not lying so directly in the line of our advance.

1. The first problem, then, arising out of the preceding discussion concerning the nature of the Perfect, and one which is certain to cause perplexity, is also the most profound and abstruse in the whole realm of metaphysics, and yet at the same time is the most insistent. It is not only the most vital of philosophical questions, but is the crux of all our religious and ethical, and in the end of all our scientific, inquiries as well. This Perfect Self, that reveals the unity and harmony of its nature more or less clearly in all the laws and uniformities of the external universe, as also in all the categories of our understanding, and in all the noblest, æsthetic, moral, and religious aspirations of our hearts, in what relation are we to regard it as standing to our finite selves or egos ? Is it identical with the finite self ; or is it a centre of experience beyond it ? Is it another Self over against and external to it, even as finite selves are over against and externally related to one another ? Now in seeking to return a clear and explicit answer to this vital question we must remind ourselves, what we trust we have already agreed upon, namely, that the one only

but sufficient type of unity in diversity of which we can have any possible experience or conception, is to be found in our own personal identity. If, therefore, the universe is to be regarded as one, that is to say, as the manifestation of some ultimate principle of unity, that ultimate principle of unity can only be regarded as an Infinite or Perfect Self. This might seem alone sufficient as an answer to the question whether there can be in the universe an ultimate plurality of selves, without saying anything more. But the question is so important and has issues so far-reaching that we cannot dismiss it in this summary fashion. Let us then endeavour to obtain as clear and consistent a conception as we can respecting the fundamental relation in which the finite stands to the Absolute or Perfect Self.

To begin with, then, it is evident in the light of the foregoing that the universe cannot be regarded as containing a plurality of mutually exclusive selves. Seeing the Divine Being must be conceived of as a Self, and we also are selves, were the relation between us and the Divine Self an external one, then necessarily God could be no more than *Primus inter pares*, chief among equals, and therefore not the Absolute or Perfect. Such, indeed, is precisely the God of ordinary popular religion and theology, which always represents the Divinity to itself as another personal power external to it, and one therefore to whom it can pray, with whom it can hold communion as friend with friend, who can hear and accept its praises, and who if alienated can be placated with song and sacrifice and all manner of ritual forms. But such a Divinity is necessarily only finite, no matter what predicates of infinitude the worshipper may in the fervour of his devotion accumulate upon it. It is only one amongst many, certainly not the Absolute Spirit as such. But from the standpoint of a consistent metaphysic the Absolute cannot, without manifest contradiction, be regarded as simply one self, no matter how great and

glorious, good and kind, among many. It must be all-inclusive, it must be the One *in* the Many, as we monistically say. If, then, the ultimate Reality or the Absolute is to be regarded as a Perfect Self, radical pluralism with its many members only related in an external fashion, and its finite God, must be ruled out ; since the One Perfect Self or Absolute if such there be must be present IN every finite ego as the fundamental principle of its unity.

Again we must equally reject the Gnostic or emanational view of the relation of God to the universe, which, shrinking from the meaningless statement that God created the world out of nothing, represents finite existences as, so to speak, flowing forth or issuing from God, as rays of light issue from the sun or sparks from a fire. Such notions, however, are thoroughly uncritical, symbolically inaccurate, and philosophically unsound. But much of our Western theology, it has to be confessed, is little more, with all its apparent profundity, than the product of such crude " picture thinking." Such ideas represent the Divine under spatial metaphors, and the definiteness of the mental picture is only too apt to be mistaken for clear thinking and penetrative insight. According to this emanational theory of creation, God is to be conceived as originally one—complete, all-containing, absolute—but as parting in the creative act with some of his being or substance, extruding it from him somewhat as the sun is thought to have thrown off the material that now constitutes the different planets, and so becoming less than he was, suffering, as they say, a lapse into finitude.¹ If this view were consistently carried out, God would have to be conceived of as becoming less and less, his being ever dwindling as the number of worlds and souls he creates out of himself increase. Now of all such crude metaphorical notions of the Divine and its

¹ See, for example, " Doctrine of Development," by Dr Hastings Rashdall, pp. 6-9. The author contends for the finitude of God.

relation to the finite we must exert ourselves strenuously to rid our minds if we would attain any sound metaphysical views of God and his relation to the universe. The Absolute cannot consistently be thought of as either primarily, or in any secondary creative sense, related externally to it, but the universe everywhere must be regarded as no more than the manifestation or revelation of the Absolute, who ever remains one with himself, perfect and complete amid all the endless number and variety of his ever-changing appearances.

For the same reason we must also avoid thinking of the Absolute as a sort of diffused gaseous consciousness enveloping our finite centres, as a nebula, for instance, envelops its nuclei ; or as both including and penetrating us as the ether is said both to include and penetrate the solid bodies distributed throughout it. Such conceptions are not unfrequently to be met with in mystical literature and theology of the somewhat hazy sentimental sort. But they implicitly deny any real self-hood to the Absolute since the divine substance conceived of as diffused like the atmosphere is necessarily without any unifying principle, there is no *centre* of experience. It is so very easy to think in terms of space, that naturally vague metaphors of this kind hover like impalpable spectres in the popular theological brain. But, let us repeat, we must make a serious effort to exorcise them from our thought if we would attain to any adequate or consistent conception of the real relation of the Absolute Spirit to our own. The monistic thinker would speak somewhat in this wise : I, what I mean by my self or ego, I that am the same self that I was and have been all my life long through all the vicissitudes of my experience, am one, literally, truly, one with the Perfect Self, in and through and by reason of that personal identity of which each one of us has a direct and intuitive cognizance." Such, when you come carefully to think it out, is, in truth, the only conceivable meaning of the saying that God and man

are one ; or that God is our deeper, diviner, truer Self. And what other intelligible meaning can we assign to such theological statements as, that God is both immanent and transcendent ; or that man is of the substance of God ; or that we live and move and have our being in God ?

A sound religious philosophy, consequently, will not allow us to regard ourselves pluralistically as standing in external relation to the Divine Self. It will not allow us to speak of ourselves as parts or portions of God as though God were a *collective* whole. It will not allow us to picture him to ourselves as limiting himself by cutting or breaking off fragments of his divine substance when he created a universe of finite existence. All such conceptions are the product of uncritical shallow philosophical thinking. There may be and doubtless are difficulties neither few nor trivial in the absolutist view of Reality. But it certainly is not exposed to the charge of framing to itself such incongruous, such impossible, nay even monstrous spatial conceptions of the Deity as the foregoing. They represent, in truth, crude but vain attempts at compromise between radical pluralism and radical monism. We may be pluralists, or we may be monists, and yet be deserving of respectful consideration. But there is one thing, it seems to us, we cannot with any claim to philosophical decency attempt to be, and that is radically both. We must make our choice and not be metaphysically covetous, striving to obtain what we deem the benefits of both. There is always need of courage in consistent philosophical thinking ; consequently eclecticism, which is generally an attempt at compromise between our philosophy and what we wish to be true, is out of place and forbidden. Inclusiveness and immanence then signify real identity. God or the Absolute can include me or dwell in me only because fundamentally one with me, and consequently the human mind, when its religious experience attains the highest

development in the mystic or cosmic consciousness, affirms, not merely its union, but its essential oneness with God. "To see and to have seen that Vision," says Plotinus, "is reason no longer. It is more than reason, before reason, and after reason; as also is the Vision that is seen. And perhaps we should not here speak of sight; for that which is seen—if we must needs speak of seer and seen as two and not one—is not discerned by the seer nor perceived as a second thing. . . . Therefore this vision is hard to tell of, for how can a man describe as other than himself that which when he discerned it, seemed not other, but himself indeed?"¹

(2) The next question which naturally arises out of our view of the Absolute as a Perfect Self, and one which is indeed involved in the preceding exposition of the relation of the finite self to the Perfect need not now detain us long. May the Absolute, we shall be asked, also be regarded as a Divine Personality? Can we, seeing the Absolute must be regarded as the supreme Self, also say it is a Person? The answer must be in the negative, and we will briefly state the reason why. And first, it does not conduce to clear thinking to use the terms self and person as synonymous. Self is by far the wider in signification of the two. The term person, both from its etymology and from its customary use, always denotes the negative aspect or element in finite selves. Moreover, it is applied exclusively to selves which have arrived at the second great stage of mental evolution, namely, the self-conscious; we never speak of selves below the human as persons. But the feature that more particularly concerns us here is the negative. Every finite self is exclusive of every other finite self, and this feature as well as self-consciousness is signified by the word person. I am *not* you, you are *not* I. A person can always be "thou'd," and is one *of* the many, not the

¹ Quoted by Miss Underhill in "Mysticism," p. 398. See also Select Works of Plotinus, trans. by T. Taylor, p. 320 (Bohn's Library).

one *in* the many ; a fundamental and most vital distinction as we have already seen. The Absolute, then, though a Self is not a person, is not a self negative of other selves. It could not of course as Absolute stand in purely negative relation to any thing whatsoever ; and therefore the personality of the Absolute, involving as it essentially would a negative relation, must in the strict sense of the term be surrendered. Nevertheless the Absolute must ever be one with itself, and if we are to be neither materialists nor pluralists, then as absolutists we must regard the Ultimate Reality as an all-inclusive Self ; since, as we have seen, the only ultimate identity conceivable is an identical Self. The Perfect Life must, therefore, be conceived of as the experience of an Absolute Self, and as absolute such a self must be regarded as supra-personal. And so we must avoid confusing the meaning of the two terms self and person ; and because the Ultimate Reality may rightly be spoken of as the Absolute Self, we must not permit ourselves also to speak of it as an Absolute Personality. But though we must in philosophy surrender the conception of the Absolute as merely our " Great Companion," it is only to discover, or rather let us say when we discover, our deeper and more intimate relation to it. We do not, however, mean by saying this to deny the possible existence of some finite personal God such as Wm. James pleads for, and such as is the object of thought in current popular theology. Such a being may exist for aught we know, in and through whom the Absolute may worthily reveal something of itself. The Absolute is of course wide enough to permit of the existence of such a being, and indeed of many such beings, within its all-embracingness ; and as externally related to us he could be our Companion, our Sympathizer, our Friend, he could be our Ruler and Judge like the Jahveh of Israel ; and with him we could hold fellowship and converse as with any other finite person great or small. Whether a being of this kind

actually exists is a matter of experience, of evidence, and of proof, on which it is not needful here that we should pronounce an opinion. But we must be permitted distinctly and emphatically to say that such a God, if he exist, cannot be allowed to act as a substitute for the Absolute, or to extrude it from the universe as superfluous either for thought or piety. For in the end we shall be irresistibly driven by thought and by piety alike to admit that there is and must be some all-embracing Absolute Experience or Self, inclusive of our personal God and ourselves; since no personal God, however great, standing as he must in a negative external relation to ourselves, could without manifest contradiction be conceived of as the *ground* of all existence, and of all possibility of intercourse and interaction between finite and finite. A mystic or absolutist philosopher, however, can nevertheless quite consistently adore the Absolute as revealed in divine personalities. But it is one thing to adore the Perfect Self as revealed in exalted historic personalities who are themselves necessarily finite, and to adore these finite historic personalities as themselves the Absolute or Perfect Self. This distinction our ordinary Christianity, in noteworthy contrast with India, seems congenitally unable to make. A great poet like Wordsworth can adore God in nature without adoring nature as God, and so idolatrously confounding the finite with the Infinite. It is the essence of all idolatry to adore the finite as the Infinite, it matters not whether the finite form adored be a natural object or an historic person. We would not, however, be understood here to condemn all idolatry. It has, we admit, performed a very necessary function in religious evolution. But there is a stage in religious experience when it has to be transcended; and this is distinctly so when, for instance, as was the case with Plotinus and with the seers of the Vedanta, the human soul attains to the true mystic consciousness of identity with the Eternal. We will now pass from this

oft-debated question as to the real existence of a Personal Deity.

(3) Another question arising out of our definition of Perfection, which we must not entirely pass over, concerns the nature of what we call sin, and again of pain and suffering, or what we collectively call evil. How can these find a place and a meaning in an all-inclusive Perfection? Our reply here must be brief, and we fear all too inadequate. Still, reverting to the analogy once more of the highest human genius, we may obtain a key, and in our judgment an invaluable one, to the solution of this mystery. In every great work of art there are disharmonies or discrepancies which are nevertheless constituent and essential factors in the perfection of the whole. In a great classical piece of music, for instance, there are discords, in themselves clashing and painful, but which, by their relation to other parts and to the whole, are resolved into harmonies, that enhance the beauty and contribute to the perfection of the complete work. So also in any great epic or drama the same reconciling principle is revealed, and it is this harmonising spirit, pervading and including all the elements or parts, which constitutes the real genius of the whole. Such works of genius offer us the highest finite expression of the fundamental principle of the universe, the principle, namely, of the One in the many. As we shall have to return to this subject of the principle of harmony or reconciliation as exhibited in the highest works of genius, with these few remarks we must leave for the present the perplexing problem of the existence of evil. The thoughtful reader will, however, no doubt be able to a considerable extent to work out for himself without further aid, and we are sure to his great profit and enlightenment, this most fruitful suggestion as to how the problem of evil is to be solved.

(4) But another objection will naturally arise on reflection upon the foregoing definition of the nature of

Perfection. We shall no doubt be asked how the Absolute can be a perfectly harmonious experience if, as we are bound to admit, it is affected with a feeling of want or need. You have said, we shall be reminded, that all life is characterized, the life of the Absolute included, by this élan, this impulse or conation, this striving towards some end. Surely this attributes some imperfection to the Absolute ; for how else can the Perfect be conceived of as experiencing any want ? Here also is a difficulty the answer to which serves still further to cast illuminating rays on the nature of absolute Perfection. But as in dealing with the foregoing objections and questions space demands that we be brief. In truth the answer here is almost obvious. As applied to the Absolute the terms need or want denote simply the necessity of self-expression. But this necessity does not arise from its finitude, that is to say, is not imposed upon it from without. There is no felt need of something external to itself in order to complete itself. What to us as students of the evolutionary process appears as an élan or movement towards some far-off goal in man, regarded from the point of view of the Absolute, or *sub specie aeternitatis*, is really its need of self-expression ; and this need, if such it can be rightly called, so far from supplying us with evidence of imperfection, is easily seen to be quite the reverse. It is indeed the Absolute's nature, an essential element of its perfection, that it should not remain eternally inactive, silent, and abstract. It is in truth this very abstract passivity attributed to the Eternal One, that constitutes the error of what is known as the mystic *via negativa*, with its effort at absorption into the empty Unity. The more perfect is life the more deeply is this necessity for self-expression felt. And here again the known experience of high genius comes to our aid. The need, or better, the impulse, to express itself, that is, to reveal its nature, is an essential feature in the artist's genius ; and the larger, the more richly endowed such a

mind is, so much the more irresistible is this impulse to reveal and embody its immediate experience. This is of course totally different from the needs that arise from our finitude, *i.e.* from our imperfection, which consists in our need of something beyond ourselves to complete us. The dog's hunger for his bone, for example, differs totally from the divine "urge" of the poet, the painter, or the musician. If then the Absolute be regarded as in a sense the Perfect Artist, and creation as the supreme art, the divine necessity of self-expression, so far from supplying an argument of imperfection, will be seen to be, indeed, an essential feature of the Absolute Experience. And so once again we seem led to view the Absolute as a Perfect Self, and a Self whose essential nature must include this necessity of self-expression or self-revelation.

(5) There is one more difficulty kindred to the foregoing which we must attempt to remove before we close this chapter. Does not, we may be asked, your view of the Absolute imply that, seeing the evolutionary process is still admittedly far from complete, something of the nature of the Absolute is as yet unexpressed and unrevealed? And if so, then have you not the One without the full complement of the many which are necessary to it? Must not the One with its nature be exhaustively revealed in a manifold adequate to its full complete expression, seeing the One and the Many are but aspects, and inseparable aspects, of a perfect whole? Suppose the nature of the Absolute Self be not completely expressed in an appropriate manifold, like a symphony only partly played through, what are we to say regarding so much of that nature as is yet unexpressed? Would there not be something left waiting in bare abstraction yet to be revealed? This would seem to bring us back to the old difficulty of the merely implicit, with no such explanation as that of ancestral history, with its stored up memories and acquired habits, to redeem it from contradiction. Must we not conclude, therefore, that an eternal un-

derived nature must necessarily be also an eternally expressed, a completely revealed nature? This objection is a plausible and serious one, since if there be a Perfect or Absolute Self with an eternal underived nature, then that nature, it would seem, must also have eternally revealed its perfection in an adequate concrete manifold. Abstract Perfection, *i.e.* a Perfection that had not disclosed its nature by expressing it in such a manifold, would, apparently, like bare abstract unity, be equivalent to nothing at all. But would not a universe in which the Absolute should from all eternity be completely and perfectly expressed be what has been termed "a block universe," leaving no room for any evolutionary process at all? If so, there would consequently be no real movement, no real activity, no real progress. These would have to be treated as mere appearance, illusions of the finite, due to the unreality of time. Absolutist philosophers in the past, it must be confessed, have too often exposed themselves to such criticisms by their adoption of the purely abstract logical method of treating the relation of the Absolute to its manifestations or appearances, instead of appealing to the rich life of concrete experience. Mr Bradley, for example, tells us that the question whether the history of a man or a world is going forwards or back does not belong to metaphysics, for nothing perfect, nothing genuinely real, can move. The Absolute, he asserts, has no seasons, but all at once bears its leaves, fruit, and blossoms. Like our globe, it always and it never has summer and winter.¹ In like manner Dr M'Taggart says, "The question presents itself—unfortunately without an answer—how a permanent and changeless character comes to develop itself in time and change. But this is only part of the larger problem—equally insoluble—how change of any sort is possible, when the ultimate reality is a timeless Absolute."²

¹ "Appearance and Reality," p. 500.

² "Hegelian Cosmology," pp. 38-9.

Prof. A. E. Taylor again writes thus: "All development means advance towards an *end*. But only that which is as yet in imperfect possession of its end can advance towards it. For that which already is all that it has it in its nature to be there can be no advance, and hence no progressive development."¹ And so in this fashion, with no appeal to real life and concrete experience, abstract logic either leaves us in a state of hopeless agnosticism, or reduces the Absolute to a static condition of eternal quiescence and inactivity. It is not surprising that in recoil from such conclusions our energetic Western nature should assert itself in the form of pragmatism, which is equally one-sided and abstract only in the opposite direction, giving sole reality to temporal movement and change.

And yet the way out of this *impasse* seems after all quite simple. Let us resort for the solution of our problem, as we have said, to experience itself, to the creative activity of the highest human genius. Genius, real genius, genius strictly so-called, as distinguished from mere talent, however brilliant, has this distinctive feature, that its inspiration and work are due to direct and immediate apprehension of the life of the Perfect as such. And for that very reason its creative activity is more than a mere analogue, it is, in truth, a genuine, and not simply a symbolic revelation, of the nature and creative activity of the Absolute Self. And so in the case of all true genius, in all great poets, dramatists, musicians, artists, we find that the immediate feeling of unity, harmony, beauty, or in one word of perfection, which is their supreme endowment, seeks, as we have already pointed out, to embody and express itself. Again, this act of self-expression is not as in lower activities mechanical or utilitarian, *i.e.* merely a means to an end or object external to the process itself, and reached only at the close. Here the distinction between means and end has

¹ "Elements of Metaphysics," p. 274.

no significance, they coincide and are one. The self-expression of the artist, the whole process of self-revelation, is an end in itself. In a very real sense the whole nature and life of the Absolute is embodied in each stage of the process, as the whole soul of the poet is in each stanza of his poem, or the whole soul of the musician may be said to be embodied in each chord and musical phrase of his master-piece. And for this reason to the insight of the poet's vision "the least of things seems infinite" (Wordsworth). In like manner nothing of the Absolute can in one sense be said to be purely abstract, seeing that the whole nature and being of the Absolute must be thought of as in each of its appearances, however lowly the form may be, the whole joy of creation is there. What is meant by Life's potentialities is no more and no less, as we have seen, than the very presence within it, even in its earliest beginnings, of that Absolute Perfection which is never present at all, and cannot be, except in the completeness of its nature. So far, therefore, as the Absolute is there in that form, though for the most part only implicit, it is not entirely abstract. Still the difficulty respecting the contradiction inherent in the idea of the merely implicit is not, we must admit, even so, entirely removed. But the experience of genius helps us still further. Let us endeavour to see how. It is, as we have said, of the very essence of genius never to cease to express itself, since such self-expression is an essential element of its perfection. However beautifully and completely the immediate experience of perfection may already have embodied and revealed its nature, yet there still remains the demand for new forms in endless succession and variety. In like manner there may have been and may yet be an infinite number of universes; and, like a great poet or a great musician, the Absolute, of whom, as we have said, these great minds are a faint reflection, may have been everlastingly pouring forth new and ever varying compositions from its exhaustless

perfection, each one of which may have adequately and completely expressed its nature. And so there is no ground to suppose that the Absolute Perfection has not already revealed the fulness of its life, since time and space must be conceived of as illimitable. Thus, then, we may think of the Absolute as ever self-revealed yet self-revealing, the music of the universe never began and never ceases, for, in the words of a German poet, "End is there none to the universe of God ; lo ! also there is no beginning."

But before we bring this chapter to a close we may remind the reader that in our main conclusions we have long ago been anticipated by the religious philosophy of India. In the West our philosophy has been surely if slowly moving to the same inevitable monistic goal. In Prof. Ladd of Harvard we have a notable western thinker, who, by a process of careful and consistent reasoning, concrete in character, has also arrived, as we saw in our last chapter, at the conclusion that the Ultimate Reality must be conceived of as an Absolute Self of which we are finite forms or appearances. But it is the crowning glory of the Vedanta that it so long ago announced, reiterated, and emphasized this deep truth in a manner that does not permit us for a moment to forget it or explain it away. This great stroke of identity, this discernment of the ultimate unity of all things in Brahma or the one Absolute Self, seems to us to constitute the master-piece and highest achievement of India's wonderful metaphysical and religious genius, to which the West has yet to pay the full tribute that is its due. And with this remark we will pass on.

In our next chapter we shall proceed to inquire into the reality of the object religion seeks ; and we shall endeavour to come to some assured conclusion on this vital question by investigating the nature and functions of our rational faculty, with a view to ascertaining what revelation of the nature of the Absolute is contained in the laws and principles that determine its legitimate activity.

CHAPTER VII

IS THERE A PERFECT EXPERIENCE?

(I) THE ANSWERS OF ABSOLUTISM AND PRAGMATISM

IN the two preceding chapters we sought to reach a conception of the real nature of that Perfection which we found to be the final object of the religious quest. Religion, we said, seeks perfection; its whole striving, which is, indeed, but the continuation and further development of the élan of life, we discovered to be towards some perfect experience. We could not conceive any other final satisfaction or consummation of religion's aspiration and effort. Our purpose in the present chapter is to prosecute still further our inquiry into the grounds on which belief in the reality of the Perfect may safely repose. We desire, if possible, to base belief in its reality on secure and imperishable foundations; to vindicate the lofty claims and enthusiasms of genuine religion by demonstrating that it has for its object that which is eternally and absolutely real. In other words we hope to show that the Perfect Life or Perfect Being is not simply an imaginative object constructed by contemplative thought for the purpose of emotional satisfaction; but is, on the contrary, the essential, eternal *Fact* of the universe itself, the one ultimate and supreme Reality. In the present chapter, therefore, we shall endeavour to establish this position by carefully examining another part of our nature, namely, our rational; we shall inquire what Reason has to disclose regarding the ultimate nature of Reality; and how far the nature of Reality revealed in the functioning of

our rational faculty coincides with the nature of the Object striven for by religion. Nothing is more important ; nothing, we hold, can well be more reassuring to the religious consciousness, than to obtain, if it legitimately can, the confirmation and support of Reason for its faith in the reality of the Absolute Perfection which it seeks. And we shall, in the first place, have to consider briefly the interpretation of our rational nature offered us by what is known as Pragmatism, whose theory of Reality and test of truth would, if admitted, not merely preclude any real knowledge of the nature of the Absolute as it is in itself, but require us to renounce our belief that there is any such Reality at all.

In the Introduction to his volume " Appearance and Reality," Mr Bradley gives a threefold definition excellently clear, of the function and purpose of philosophy proper. Philosophy, he says, is an attempt to know reality as against mere appearance ; or, it is the study of first principles ; or, again, it is the effort to comprehend the universe, not simply piecemeal and by fragments, but as a whole. When we carefully ponder these definitions, or rather this threefold definition, it becomes clear that the special concern of philosophy is not with the first appearance of things as they come to us in the so-called flux of experience, but with what is beyond phenomena ; with the unchanging and the eternal. Philosophy, therefore, seeks acquaintance with the enduring, the ultimate, the fundamental, in other words, with the Absolute.

Now it requires but little reflection to discover, that things as they first appear or present themselves to our senses and perceptions do not come to us in their true and proper character, that is as they intrinsically are. All our first experiences of things, it is evident, have subsequently to be corrected and extended if we would know them in their truth, know them as they really are ; since our first acquaintance with them gives us

but a relative knowledge. By relative knowledge is meant knowledge which is limited and conditioned by our bodily organs and sensations. Now our perceptions of things by means of our bodily organs are, it is notorious, not merely limited, but liable to endless perversion and misinterpretation. And the reason is clear. These organs were not bestowed upon us for the purpose of enabling us to acquire the final and absolute truth about the world. For that purpose they must be supplemented with quite other functions and activities of the mind. Our bodily organs were acquired, scientific biology tells us, during the process of evolution, and have assumed their present forms and functions by reason of their usefulness in the pursuit of the ends, or in meeting the exigencies, of what we term our practical existence. Hence we are constantly discovering that the first superficial views which we take of the various objects around us, views which, as we say, may, indeed, very well suffice for the so-called practical interests or needs of ordinary life, are by no means the only or the final truth about them. The sun, for example, astronomy tells us, does not really move round the earth, though it seems to us to do so ; and indeed for practical purposes we still find it suffices to assume that it does, for we perpetuate the primitive blunder every year in our almanacs, which continue to inform us of the various times throughout the year at which it rises and sets. Heat, again, used to be thought of as a substance and named caloric, but now we know it is only a mode of motion ; though it certainly does seem as though it were actually something that passes from one body to another. Once more ; there are, so science now tells us, no such things in nature as solid bodies, bodies only appearing solid to us, because our senses are far too feeble to discern the spaces that nevertheless actually exist between atom and atom. And so on without end.

Now what we term *Absolutism* takes its stand on the real existence in the human mind of a genuine intellectual

interest. The special aim of philosophy, it asserts, is to penetrate beyond these first appearances of things to their innermost core, to their ultimate nature. To know first principles, to know the final truth about the world and the things it contains, or, otherwise expressed, to comprehend the universe as a whole, and that quite apart from any supposed or any actual utility such knowledge may have for us—this is the real, this the distinctive purpose of philosophy. Metaphysical or philosophical truth, it declares, has its own interest, its own value, and is an end in itself.

But the reality, the genuineness, of this purely intellectual interest, this interest in truth for truth's own sake, quite apart from any ulterior or extrinsic value it may possess in relation to the satisfaction of other elements of our nature, is, however, by a certain class of thinkers strenuously denied. We refer, of course, to those thinkers who at the present time call themselves *Pragmatists*, and their philosophy *Pragmatism*.

It is not, however, difficult to see, that the attack which Pragmatism or utilitarian philosophy makes on the Absolutist's claim that Truth has rights and an interest peculiarly her own, contains a palpable fallacy, a fallacy that lies at its very basis, and to detect which brings the whole fabric crumbling to the dust. The fallacy we refer to tacitly or avowedly assumes that the limits of a function must necessarily be determined by the conditions of its evolution. Yet one of the facts that meets us everywhere in the study of biology is that an organ developed for one purpose, that is to say whose development has been instigated, guided, and conditioned by some special necessity, when developed, will often assume quite a different function. Moreover, this new function will sometimes mark a fresh departure in the evolutionary career of the organism, a career higher in the scale of life than anything it had attained to in its previous history. Let us take one or two familiar but very interesting and

important instances. The lungs of air-breathing animals we know beyond doubt arose from the swim-bladder of the fish ; the wings of a bird from the forefeet of a quadruped. In each of these cases no new organ appears ; but what we find is the modification of an old organ and function, marking the emergence of a new need, and the commencement of a new and higher stage in the evolutionary process. In each case there results the adaptation of an old organ to a new and more refined element, in relation to which it was previously incapable of functioning. Now, as we have remarked, this different functioning of an old organ in response to new necessities, is a familiar feature in the evolution of life, a feature constantly met with in biological research, and is indeed an essential factor in life's evolution. Again, take such an organ as the human hand, which, even if not now undergoing any further development, is yet constantly being put to purposes quite other than any that determined its development. Doubtless the human hand was evolved in relation to the necessities of our practical sensuous life, such as to grasp the implement of toil or wield the weapon of war. Yet now it often holds the pen of the poet, or guides the brush of the artist ; in both these cases discharging a higher function in response to nobler needs. And, again, the tongue was not in the first instance, we may be sure, evolved for the purpose of speech, but in response to quite other very humble and purely physical necessities, though now there may flow from it the eloquence of a Burke or a Demosthenes. But what need to multiply examples ? They meet us everywhere in biological study.

Now precisely the same principle obtains in the case of the mind. Here, too, we find existing organs and functions undergoing transformation in the course of mental evolution ; old and even primitive powers assume new and vastly nobler activities. That the evolution of our artistic creative powers, for example, as in music, painting,

sculpture, and poetry has proceeded from the humblest utilitarian beginnings is almost universally recognized. From their first feeble glimmerings in human and even in animal experience it would be impossible to guess what their nature and function have become now at their highest and best. All of them have undergone, in the most advanced races of mankind, transcendental mutation, and now have infinite significance. Compare the æsthetic ideas, for example, of a painted and be-feathered Indian with those expressed in Raphael's "Sistine Madonna," Millet's "Angelus," or some of the best painting of the Far East, and it is evident some great glory has entered into art and transfigured it. Indeed, this transformation and transfiguration of function is a universal law of life. In Prof. Starbuck's invaluable manual on the "Psychology of Religion," the point under discussion is well and clearly brought out in relation to the religious life. Having referred to the fact that religious awakenings come most frequently at the age of puberty or adolescence, he remarks that this is the time, biologically speaking, when we enter into deep relation with racial life, and then adds that "in a certain sense the religious life is an irradiation of the reproductive instinct. That there is a kinship between religion and sex has been," he says, "fully recognized by most sociologists, alienists, and psychologists." But then, and this is the vital point of the whole matter, he warns us, "we are not to suppose that in finding the remote conditions under which a relation sprang up we have found the clue to the nature of the fully developed product. Even if it is true that religion was at the first intimately bound up in those duties and ceremonies which are the outgrowth of sex, it may," he tells us, "have entirely changed its character." And it cannot be denied, as Prof. Starbuck further remarks, that in tracing psychologically the growth of religion in human experience, oversight of this fact has led to considerable misapprehension, though, he

adds, in this connection the error is now happily being recognized.¹

Turning now to the absolutist philosopher, it is his contention that of this universal law of life's evolution, namely, progress through transfiguration of function, our rational nature offers us another very clear and conspicuous example. Though the development of reason may, undeniably, in the first instance, have been conditioned and necessitated by the exigencies of practical life ; though the impulse to acquire knowledge of the truth of things may have arisen from the essential importance such knowledge was found to have in meeting the physical wants of life ; yet the intellect, he asserts, has now, by a great mutation, assumed a new and transcendental function. It is no longer, he maintains, restricted in its activity exclusively to the search for such knowledge only as may be made subservient to our purely human and sensuous purposes ; but, without doubt, seeks truth for its own sake also, apart from any reference to ulterior needs. In other words, the absolutist affirms that reason in the human mind has blossomed out into mathematics, logic, science, and philosophy, activities with aims peculiarly their own ; that is to say, there has developed in our nature a genuine and purely intellectual interest, the satisfaction of which has its own value and is an end in itself. And so now the highest activity of the rational faculty is seen, again to quote Mr Bradley, in the effort to know reality as against appearances, to reach first principles, to comprehend the universe not merely piecemeal and in fragments, but as a whole.

Here, then, the pragmatist thinker joins issue with the absolutist. The reality of this higher, this philosophical or transcendental activity of the intellect he expressly denies. " Professor Bergson," says Wm. James, " inverts the traditional Platonic doctrine absolutely. Instead of intellectual knowledge being the profounder, he calls

¹ See Starbuck's " Psychology of Religion," pp. 401-3.

it the more superficial. Instead of being the only adequate knowledge, it is grossly inadequate ; and its only superiority is the practical one of enabling us to make short cuts through experience, and thereby to save time. *The one thing it cannot do is to reveal the nature of things.*

. . . Dive back into the flux itself then . . . if you wish to know reality, that flux which Platonism, in its strange belief that only the immutable is excellent, has always spurned ; turn your face towards sensation, that flesh-bound thing which rationalism has always loaded with abuse." ¹

Now in view of such an attack as this on the higher claims of reason, we have a right to ask, as a matter of mere psychological equity and consistency, why is the intellect thus selected for such invidious treatment, and refused its true dignity because of the humbleness of its birth ? Have not all our powers been similarly evolved ? Must they not all, in the beginning, equally have served some useful purpose in the struggle for existence, individual or racial, when they first appeared ? Surely none of them would have emerged unless called for, and the needs they first met were, one may take for granted, of a very lowly and even sensuous order. We have then to ask the pragmatist whether he intends us to apply to all the other functions of our nature, without exception, the same purely utilitarian principle of interpretation he insists on applying to the intellect ? If not, then why not ? There are, we notice, divines not a few who also seem, for some reason or other best known to themselves, positively eager to follow James and Bergson in their belittling of our intellectual functions, and impulsively to rejoice in refusing to credit reason with any genuine metaphysical or transcendental significance. This is surely thoughtless precipitancy. For the positivist and the materialist will quite justly say : " If you are going to be pragmatists or utilitarians at all, then be thorough-

¹ " Pluralistic Universe," p. 252.

going with your principle, keep to your text, be consistent in its application all round, and treat your religion in the same manner as you do your reason. Reason, you say, cannot give any metaphysical knowledge—knowledge, that is, of Absolute Reality; all the knowledge it can ever yield you is only for the sake of useful action. Its practical evolutionary reference and value, you admit, prescribe the exclusive limits of its legitimate functioning. Well and good. But in your treatment of religion we demand of you that you be just and fair, and hold to the general principle implied in your particular treatment of the intellect, and not draw back when asked to apply it to the interpretation of religion also. Admit then in the case of religion as well as of the intellect that the limits of its legitimate functioning are determined by the purely utilitarian service it has admittedly rendered in protecting the interests and fostering the development of society and the race; and that beyond this it cannot go; that any claim to a transcendental function made on its behalf must no more be allowed than when a similar claim is preferred by the absolutist on behalf of reason. There is one thing you cannot with any claim to philosophical honesty do, and that is pick and choose to suit your caprice, or it may be the exigencies of your dogmatic or other prepossessions and prejudices, assigning to reason no higher functional value than the humble and primitive one of a purely pragmatic activity, and, then, when you pass to the sphere of religion crediting love with angel wings." Now to such a demand as this we confess we see no honest or effective reply on the part of a religious pragmatist. This utilitarian attitude towards the meaning and function of religion, as we have seen, is avowedly and consistently adopted by Mr Benjamin Kidd in his work on "Social Evolution," and with certain reservations and modifications by J. S. Mill also in his essay on "The Use of Religion." Both in their treatment of religion are consistent with their utilitarian convictions.

But what cannot be permitted as consistent with philosophical honour is that you be a pragmatist when you deal with the intellect, and then when you pass to religion transform yourself for the nonce into a transcendental metaphysician. But let us look at this matter a little more carefully, seeing the question is so important, even vital.

Love is regarded by the most advanced religions as the highest, the fairest, the truest of all our immediate experiences, as indeed the crowning glory of God Himself, constituting His very essence—" *God is Love.*" Yet it is not possible to deny that it has had a very lowly organic origin in finite experience, arising in all probability, in the first instance, in the " soft, warm contact " of body with body, as of a mother with her babe, stimulating thus that intense interest and attention which have been so essential to the support and protection of infancy, and hence proving of such evolutionary value. It is, then, but reasonable, in consonance with sound utilitarian principles, to assume that love remains, through all its variations, true in nature and function to this evolutionary origin and value. Its usefulness in the evolution of life has been unquestionably immense, and should rightly, therefore, prescribe the limits of its function and significance. Nevertheless, James, in his great work on the " Varieties of Religious Experience," rejects even with scorn and sarcasm this pragmatic assumption which takes it for granted " that spiritual value is undone if lowly origin be asserted," though, in truth, this is the very assumption he, along with Bergson and pragmatists in general, everywhere makes in regard to the functioning of reason. But if the pragmatic method of explaining our various powers, their development, together with the nature and limits of their functions, be sound, we must, in all consistency, be prepared to apply it everywhere, and we have no right to make an exception of religion. To adopt the German proverb, having said A, we shall have

to say B, and go on to the end of the alphabet. If the pragmatist should, however, refuse, and claim the right to give religion exceptional treatment, then it is our bounden duty to call upon him to show the ground of his claim to treat religion in this exceptional manner. Why, we ask, should you allow a higher, a transcendental, function to the affective side of our nature, and claim for love that through it you can ascend to the very throne of the universe and know the nature of God Himself, whose essence you declare it constitutes; and then turn on reason only by comparison to disparage it, refusing to admit that it has any nobler function than a merely utilitarian one to discharge in life? There is neither consistency nor equity in such procedure. Should, however, the pragmatist admit the general applicability of his utilitarian method, then, so it seems to us, religion completely collapses on both sides of our nature—the intellectual and affective—for want of indispensable transcendental support; both reason and love resolve themselves into nothing more than pragmatic or utilitarian activities, whereby the individual or the race, or both, have been aided in their struggle for existence. And apparently in the end there is no escape from materialism, or, at best, a hopeless agnosticism.

The general question that thus confronts us is, therefore, whether we are to endorse the assumption that the function of any organ, whether of mind or body, is prescribed and limited by the conditions of its evolution. The absolutist can, with confidence founded on the very nature of things, answer emphatically in the negative. He holds that the present function of any organ or faculty is not in the least affected by the humbleness of its evolutionary birth. We can, he would point out, none the less gaze with delight on the sublime splendours of the starry heavens, though we may know full well that our organs of vision were not primarily evolved for the purpose of affording us this elevating joy. As Mr Bradley

epigrammatically remarks, why anything should be the weaker for having developed is not obvious. And so the absolutist philosopher, unlike the pragmatist, can follow the evolution of reason, as he can follow the evolution of love, till it ascends the Mount of Transfiguration. He sees love in the finite human mind pass upwards from her lowly origin until she enters into her beatitude as an immediate and direct experience of the supreme attribute and very essence of God. Reason he can follow likewise in its ascent from lowly sensuous forms and purely utilitarian activities, until it also becomes transfigured and radiant with transcendental meaning. And if it does not, like love, itself enter into immediate experience and possession of the divine Perfection, at least it can, from the height to which it has ascended, survey the glory of that Promised Land, and if only from a distance, yet truthfully report to us that it is no Utopia, no vain and merely idealistic dream, that is the object of religion's quest, but nothing less than the eternal and absolute Reality itself.

Neither M. Bergson, then, nor Wm. James, nor, indeed, any one else, has adduced any valid ground whatsoever for the utilitarian limitation of our rational powers, for the denial of the capacity claimed for reason to see things in the light of the universal order to which they belong. It seems, therefore, nothing but dogmatism that, purely on the ground of its utilitarian origin, refuses to admit the higher function of reason, its competence, namely, to inquire successfully into the nature of that Ultimate Reality of which all things finite seem at any rate to be the appearance. Certainly there is nothing in the nature of the evolutionary process as expounded by M. Bergson or any other scientist to justify a procedure so arbitrary ; but, on the contrary, there are analogies without number throughout nature to warrant and encourage our belief in the evolution of those higher transcendental functions which the absolutist claims the intellect is now capable of

exercising. Let us then see how this claim of the absolutist may be still further supported and defended, and in doing so we shall avail ourselves especially of Mr Bradley's brilliant dialectic in his monumental work, "Appearance and Reality."

Mr Bradley tells us that as human nature is constituted it is impossible that we should abstain from thought, that is, metaphysical thought, about the universe. Even the average man in the presence of a world so amazing as that in which he finds himself is obliged to do more than seek merely to satisfy his so-called practical needs—he is compelled both to wonder and to reflect. The world is there as a natural object of thought as well as of utility, and is always likely to remain so. How could it be otherwise seeing the human mind, as we maintain the plain facts of our nature testify, does now possess these higher, reflective, and contemplative powers? It is, therefore, but paying to human nature the tribute due to its true dignity and power to assert that, when all its lower sensuous needs and desires are met and satisfied, there will still remain those higher impulses which proclaim their presence when we begin, as Mr Bradley says, to wonder and to reflect. The intellect, therefore, as a matter of fact is not restricted to the exclusively instrumental function of forwarding our purely finite human sensuous purposes as pragmatists affirm. When, therefore, Wm. James declares that "The whole function of Philosophy ought to be to find out what definite difference it will make to you and to me at definite instants of our life if this or that world formula be the true one,"¹ the absolutist replies to such a dogmatic and unwarranted limitation of the function of Reason by an appeal to fact. As a matter of fact, the human mind simply *has* developed powers and *is* actuated by motives infinitely nobler than those with which Wm. James here exclusively credits it. The universe is there, says Mr Bradley, not simply for us

¹ "Pragmatism," p. 50.

to make use of, but also to comprehend. Reality has a structure or nature of its own for us to investigate, quite apart from any advantage we may derive from our knowledge of it for our own finite fleeting sensuous desires and needs. Philosophical thought, such is the absolutist position, is just one form of mental activity whereby the finite self transcends its finitude, and proclaims its kinship or rather oneness with the Eternal and the Absolute. To tell us, therefore, that at every step of philosophical inquiry into the nature and structure of the universe the investigator must always keep an eye on the relatively trivial and transitory interests of his own poor finite self, and ask continually what difference it would make to him, or to any one else for that matter, if this or that world formula were true, is not merely to degrade philosophy, but to strip human nature itself of one of its noblest self-transcendent powers. Hence, with a fervour not usual with him, Mr Bradley is moved to exclaim in the Introduction to his work, "When poetry, art, and religion have ceased wholly to interest, or when they show no longer any tendency to struggle with ultimate problems and to come to an understanding with them, when the sense of mystery and enchantment no longer draws the mind to wander aimlessly and to love it knows not what; when, in short, twilight has no charm, then metaphysics will be worthless."¹ The human mind, by reason of a deep irresistible impulse within it, is ever reaching out towards the vast, the eternal, the absolute, the divine; and these apparently aimless wanderings, this love for it knows not what, and this twilight charm, if we probe deeply into their meaning, are the profound movement of the finite self towards conscious fellowship or union with that "over-arching and enveloping" divine, which, as we have seen, Wm. James himself has told us, is religion's real essence and the secret of its power. The question of the value of metaphysics or

¹ "Appearance and Reality," pp. 3, 4.

philosophy, therefore, resolves itself into the question whether we are to ponder and reflect on the ultimate reality at all, or restrict ourselves exclusively to our transient finite sensuous and purely human necessities. "Metaphysics," says Mr Bradley, "takes its stand on this side of human nature, this desire to think about and comprehend reality."¹ The whole question at issue between the Pragmatist and the Absolutist is thus plainly and succinctly stated, and the answer cannot well be doubted. There is as a fact of experience that in us by which we find ourselves compelled to transcend our purely personal, private, or our merely finite human interests and needs, and one form this impulse takes is the desire we all more or less feel, which many of the greatest minds have irresistibly felt, to inquire into the first principles of things, or, as Mr Bradley says, to comprehend the universe not merely piecemeal or in fragments but as a whole. That there is then a distinctly intellectual or metaphysical interest, apart from any relation to the satisfaction of any one or more among our other numerous wants and desires, is, we may rest assured, a fact of our human nature, which, however much certain thinkers may, in the interests of some quasi-philosophical theory, attempt to repudiate and suppress, will irresistibly assert itself, and in the long run refuse to be ignored.

But if this purely intellectual and metaphysical interest be allowed, important consequences necessarily follow which must now be emphasized. In the first place, if it be a prime function of our nature to think about ultimate reality at all, to inquire into the first principles of things apart from any extrinsic reference, then certainly this should be done as thoroughly as our nature permits. If thought is to be true to itself, it must not in the second place be entangled with other functions of our being. These two intimately related conditions of effective thinking have to be rigorously enforced if thought is to

¹ "Appearance and Reality," p. 4.

be valid. It must be allowed a development and activity of its own, that is to say, it must be guided in all its operations exclusively by its own distinctive principles or laws ; and this would be impossible were it intruded upon and impeded by extraneous and alien considerations. But the pragmatic opponent of metaphysics, as Mr Bradley observes, is driven to a dilemma. Either he must condemn all reflection about the essence or ultimate truth of things ; and if so he breaks with one of the highest functions of our nature ; or else he allows us to think, indeed, but not to think strictly, not to think exclusively in accordance with the principles of thought itself. In other words, he would hold thought in as with bit and bridle lest it should bear him, as undoubtedly it sometimes will, whither on other grounds he would decline to go. He cannot, of course, suppress the intellect altogether. To exterminate thought is impossible, and the attempt would be ridiculously absurd. But he will not let it have complete freedom ; that is to say, he will not permit it to function exclusively according to the laws of its own nature. He would reduce it to bondage ; he would make it a beast of burden, to carry the weight of other interests. This attempt to restrict the activities of reason to the mean services of a drudge, to make it, so to speak, the Cinderella in the household of our purely human and finite interests is indeed nothing new. It is, of course, essentially the ecclesiastical attitude towards the intellect ; though of late it has been elaborated afresh, and under the name of Pragmatism acclaimed as ushering in a new era in the history of philosophical thought. And yet, when Wm. James tells us that the test of the truth of an idea is that it works well ; or when Mr F. C. S. Schiller asks why truth should not prove subtly flexible and adjust itself to the differences of our individual experiences and even to our idiosyncrasies,¹ or when Cardinal Newman² declared, as he did, that a man

¹ *Hibbert Journal*, Jan. 1906, p. 339. ² "University Sermons," p. 192.

is responsible for his faith, *i.e.* for his beliefs and convictions, because he is responsible for his likings and dislikings, his hopes and his opinions, and that it is upon these inner and subjective conditions that faith depends, when we read the utterances of such typical pragmatists as these, it is perfectly evident that the right, or even the possibility, not to say the duty, of pursuing truth disinterestedly, *i.e.* for its own sake, apart from any entanglement with other functions of our nature, is openly repudiated. Thought with them must not be free, must not be permitted to follow exclusively the laws of its own nature, but must be broken in and harnessed to other interests. Such writers justly expose themselves to the taunt of Mr Bradley when he remarks that all this is equivalent to saying, You may satisfy your instinctive longing to reflect so long as you do it in a way that is unsatisfactory. If your character is such that in you thought is satisfied by what does not and cannot pretend to be thought proper, that is quite legitimate. But if you are constituted otherwise, and if in you a more strict thinking is a want of your nature, that is by all means to be crushed out. And he rightly adds, "This is at once dogmatic and absurd." The Pragmatist then seeks to dethrone reason from her legitimate and regal position in her own kingdom, the kingdom of thought, and to reduce her to bondage by making her, as we have remarked, merely the slave to other interests than her own. He tries to cage the eagle. Now this is flagrantly unjust to the high prerogative of reason; it is not, as Mr Bradley appropriately says, using another figure of speech, playing the game fairly. If you sit down to play, he tells the pragmatist, you should honestly keep to the rules of the game, and not introduce issues that, however in other respects important they may be, are yet as regards the truth of things irrelevant. To introduce our wishes and hopes, our likings and dislikings, as does Cardinal Newman; or the individual differences of our

experiences, even our idiosyncrasies, as does Mr Schiller ; or consequences to our purely sensuous nature, as does Wm. James, is then not to play the game of thought according to the rules, rather is it to seduce our feet from the narrow way of strict veracity to walk in the broad road that, even though flowery, leads in the end to destruction. The nature of the tangle in which pragmatism has become involved is evident ; it is one in which we are all more or less apt to get ensnared when any subject awakens strong and vivid emotion. The confusion we refer to is that in which the psychological reasons why we actually do hold certain opinions, are confounded with or substituted for those objective rational grounds on which our convictions should be based if thought were free. All sorts of reasons—reasons of temperament, of association, of early training and education—account for the fact that certain persons believe what they do. We all recognize these various reasons for the opinions held by the people around us, and we are always more or less ready with our psychological explanations ; explanations, as we say, founded on the special temperament, character, associations, education, and so forth, of the persons concerned. But the pragmatist, such an one, for example, as Cardinal Newman, actually erects these purely subjective psychological explanations why a person believes into valid reasons why such beliefs should be held ; and, indeed, Mr Schiller cannot see why in the world truth should not be flexible, sufficiently to adjust itself forsooth even to his idiosyncrasies.

Now the absolutist knows no such compromise, he has a criterion, and by that criterion, as we shall presently see, he resolutely stands. Truth has imperial rights of her own ; thought to be valid must be free. And Mr Bradley claims that thought when thus free and acting according to the principles of its own nature, unentangled with other functions of our being, has achieved two results. It has, on the one hand, rendered it impossible

to hold materialism as an ultimate theory of reality ; and on the other hand it has also shown that ordinary orthodox theology is equally incompetent to give us the ultimate truth of things. Both these views of reality, he tells us, vanish like ghosts at the touch of free sceptical inquiry. He does not condemn wholly, he says, these beliefs, but he is quite sure that either taken seriously, *i.e.* as final, is the mutilation of our nature.¹ There is, however, a third thing, which, we claim, Mr Bradley's theory of reality has done, it has established on the granite rock of reason itself that view of the Absolute which we have seen is implied in the religious quest, and which we have also seen is the explanation of life's whole evolution. For the absolutist's inquiry into the nature of Reality, as revealed in the criterion which reason demands as the final and exclusive test of truth, results in the conclusion that Reality is an all-inclusive, perfectly harmonious immediate experience, in which there are no ultimate discrepancies, no unreconciled contradictions. Let us, then, address ourselves to the task of expounding as concisely as we can the absolutist criterion of truth and its significance for our present inquiry.

¹ " Appearance and Reality," p. 5.

CHAPTER VIII

IS THERE A PERFECT EXPERIENCE?—(*Continued*)

(2) THE CRITERION OF TRUTH

TRUTH, then, for the absolutist, is not merely a means to an ulterior end, is no mere instrument of successful activity in the pursuit of our finite needs, but like art is an end in itself. The process of true thinking and the truth when attained have intrinsic, not merely relative and utilitarian worth. Right thinking is a form of harmony and therefore of value on its own account, and in this respect not differing essentially from fine art. We have, therefore, what may truly be called an intellectual, as we have also an æsthetic and moral, interest; all of them forms of finite experience in which is revealed more or less clearly and perfectly, the presence, the control, and, therefore, the real nature of the Absolute Experience. This, then, is the distinctive claim of the absolutist philosophy as contrasted with the pragmatist or utilitarian. It claims that truth is a form of harmony or consistency; in it there is no colliding between idea and idea or idea and known fact. Any judgment, it says, which is true, and in the degree in which it is true, does not collide with fact, and does not contradict other ideas already acknowledged as true. Perfect consistency, then, with known fact and with other ideas also recognized as true, such is the demand absolutism makes of a judgment that claims to possess the quality of truth.

But this implies that there is a tribunal before which all our judgments or ideas that claim to be true must

perforce appear, a tribunal which declares that what is self-discrepant, what collides with fact or with other ideas admitted to be true, cannot itself be true, however earnestly on other grounds it may plead for acceptance. But if this criterion be acknowledged it must be absolute, that is to say, it is one with which in the end no other can be allowed to compete; it is, therefore, one which is always awaiting us as the final arbiter amid all our doubts, questionings, and debates, one from whose decision there is and there can be no further appeal. What claims to be true must not be discrepant.

Again, every judgment is a judgment of Reality; that is, every judgment in its claim to be true, thereby claims to hold of Reality. And this is equivalent to saying, that a true judgment is one which, in making it, a person declares himself to be under Reality's control. He says: In affirming this idea to be true I do so, not because I wish it to be true, not because I have any personal or private interest in its truth, but because in making it I submit to the control of Reality. Every idea, therefore, claiming to be true thereby claims to be either directly or indirectly under such control. It will be observed, then, that if this interpretation of the nature of thought be correct, the claim made on behalf of the true that it shall not be contradictory, is of the utmost value and importance, inasmuch as it implies that in the appropriate functioning of the intellect we have a revelation of the Ultimate Reality; a revelation which proclaims the Absolute's nature to be perfectly harmonious; that is to say, containing within itself no irreconcilable discrepancy, and accepting no final contradiction.

This revelation of the nature of Reality, then, contained in the true functioning of thought, whereby it gives to thought its one absolute standard or criterion of truth, if accepted at all must be acknowledged to be of infallible as also of final authority. The Absolute, this criterion declares, is and must be harmonious; it can contain no

fundamental discrepancies, and therefore it does not accept contradiction as true.

The absolutist philosopher in this way claims to have a revelation of Ultimate Reality, and speaks to us somewhat in the following fashion: "The claim we make on behalf of Thought or the Rational Faculty in the human mind is, that if its true significance be inquired into, it will be found to contain in its structure and function an indubitable revelation of the nature of that Absolute Being, which in the language of religion you name God. You have always been asking of religion, have you not? that it shall offer you a revelation of this 'over-arching' and 'enveloping' divine Being; a revelation that shall be certain and absolute, of unquestioned authority and infallible. Well, such a revelation is already provided for you in the very nature and activity of your own rational powers. What, when you come to know your spiritual needs most deeply and truly, is it that you are demanding of your religious authorities, what but that they shall guarantee to you and safeguard all your highest and holiest ideals, that they shall give you an assurance that in pursuing them you are not chasing beautiful phantoms, the creatures of your imagination, but something that endures, something absolutely and eternally real? Nothing short of this we are sure will finally satisfy you. For your heart is demanding in religion the satisfaction, not of any transitory want or fleeting desire, but of its yearning for something ultimate and absolute, something that shall abide now and for evermore unchangeably the same. Only in a Deity than whom there is and can be nothing actually or conceivably greater, more inclusive, or perfect, we are sure, can the pilgrimage of your human spirit terminate in security and repose. A supreme Being, a God absolute and eternal, is what your heart is really seeking. A God less than this, a finite God, however great, with somewhat still beyond or outside him yet to be discovered

and attained, though he might perhaps suffice for a time, suffice for some lower and less persistent needs, could not satisfy permanently, could not meet the deepest cravings of your nature. You cannot be really at peace, your religious aspirations cannot experience their complete fruition till they have reached and grasped the uttermost Reality of all. Such, we think, is the correct interpretation of your deeper religious nature. You want, then, an authoritative assurance that such a Deity exists; some additional assurance than simply that he is the desire of your heart. You want to know that your search for such a Being is objectively justified by his real existence. Well, we point you to such a revelation, to one whose authority cannot be finally questioned, and whose infallibility is absolute. If you come to us we shall not seek to prove anything in the ordinary sense of the term, *i.e.* by reasoning from effect to cause, or by other argumentative process. But we shall direct you instead to Reason itself; we shall ask you to inquire what are the principles, what the presuppositions implied, what the exact nature of the criterion of truth present in all its legitimate functionings. We believe, nay, we are sure, that in this way you will be able to gain what you seek, namely, a truly authoritative revelation of the nature of that Ultimate Reality in whom alone you can find final satisfaction. For Reason, you will discover, has no meaning, no justification of her high and irresistible claim to authority except that in every legitimate exercise of her function there is immanent the presence and control of the one Universal Spirit. On the ground of this immanence, therefore, she bases her claim to an authority divine and absolute. In the criterion of truth to which our philosophy points, you will discover, beyond all doubt and cavil, a genuine, a final, and an authoritative revelation of the nature of that Perfect Reality you so passionately desire and seek." Such, it seems to us, is the claim the absolutist may rightly make; for to him the criterion of truth is no mere

useful, mental habit, no mere set of mechanical concepts to which utilitarianism would reduce it, but a veritable revelation, final, authoritative, infallible, of the nature of Absolute Being.

Absolutism, then, seeks to establish the real existence of Perfection by examining into the structure of the mind itself. It interrogates one of the highest powers of our nature, and thereby shows genuine faith ; faith that, by so doing, in its desire to know Reality it will not be disappointed. It believes, whatever in the end may happen to the ancient and more popular oracles of religion at the hands of critical inquiry, that in the rational faculty itself the nature of the Absolute stands infallibly and for ever revealed. Absolutism in this manner transforms reason from an enemy into a friend. It claims for reason, so long regarded by traditional religion as its foe, more dreaded, because far more dangerous, than the persecutor with his faggot and rack, that, if only rightly questioned, and its real voice heard, it will not only prove a true friend of religion, but will assume the garb of a most reverent piety and itself perform the function of a hierophant of the Eternal Mysteries. Nor is this, in truth, by any means an extravagant claim which absolutism makes on the behalf of Reason. Rather is it an act of highest trust in the essential divinity of our nature. To those who are gifted with ability to perceive the real connection that exists between the fundamental principles of our rational nature and the final object of the religious quest, the exposition of the logical process becomes thus itself suffused with religious emotion. It assumes the highest interest, and becomes of vital consequence. For by such an inquiry into the nature of thought, we see what appeared to be the eternal quarrel between Reason and Religion finally laid to rest. We are guided to an insight into their essential harmony and ultimate unity ; so that these two elements of our mental life, so long estranged and at strife, and suffering so much, each through

a misunderstanding of the nature and functions of the other, are seen not merely reconciled so as to be mutually tolerant, but as co-operant in guiding the striving spirit of man into the light and peace of the Perfect Life. Let us, then, turn our attention to the absolutist's exposition of the intellectual act termed judgment, which constitutes the essential feature of the rational process.

In the act of judgment we used to be told that one idea was predicated of another; that it consisted in joining together or comparing two ideas. "Judgment," said Prof. Jevons, "consists in comparing together two notions or ideas derived from simple apprehension, so as to ascertain whether they agree or differ."¹ Mr Bradley, however, with convincing force and great lucidity, criticizes this notion of the function of judgment, and in doing so casts a very illuminating light on the nature of the whole rational process. "How does judgment stand," he asks, "to other psychical states, and in ultimate reality what must be said of it?" His answer is, in brief, that every judgment is a judgment the subject of which is Reality; that truth and falsehood are qualities dependent on the relation of our ideas to Reality, and not on their relations among themselves. In every true proposition, therefore, there is a submission to Reality; its reference to Reality is of the very essence of a judgment. Let us take a simple illustration. Let us make the affirmation, The cloud obscures the sun. What in this judgment is the precise nature of the intellectual act concerned? We used to be told that here the idea cloud was the subject, and the complex idea, obscuring-the-sun, was the predicate. But these are only ideas in our mind, between which no doubt as mental states or activities certain relations exist, but it is not about the relations between these psychical facts that we desire to say anything when we make the statement, The cloud obscures the sun. We do not, of course, mean that the

¹ "Elementary Lessons in Logic," by Prof. Jevons, p. 12.

idea cloud inside our head obscures the idea sun, also inside our head. These ideas are not realities except in the quite irrelevant sense that they exist, of course, as psychical facts in our mind at the moment we make the assertion. But none of these mental facts is the subject concerning which judgment is made. Truth and falsehood, as we have said, are qualities not of the relations between our ideas, but of the relation between our ideas and Reality. We must, therefore, carefully distinguish between the mere grammatical subject of the sentence and the subject of the judgment. The subject of the judgment is Reality, *i.e.* some real happening in the external world. In judgment the synthesis is not a synthesis of ideas, but a reference of ideas to Reality as their subject.

Take another illustration. When we say, Gold is yellow, no doubt some fact is present to our mind to which we refer when we pronounce this judgment, but not a mental fact or idea. The idea gold is what is termed an abstract universal, *i.e.* it does not denote anything in particular. And even if we happen to have some images of particular gold things in our mind at the time we make the affirmation, still none of these mental images, nor any of the particular things they represent, is here the subject of the judgment. But if neither the idea gold, nor any particular gold object or objects, is the subject about which we are affirming, what is the subject of our judgment when we say, Gold is yellow? Again the reply is—Reality. What we intend to indicate by our affirmation is something apart from any mental facts or events inside our heads. The judgment has reference to an invariable conjunction of attributes or qualities in the constitution of the real world; it affirms the nature of that real world to be such that wherever you have a substance with the qualities indicated by gold, there you will invariably have the special colour yellow. We are asserting something concerning the nature or structure

of the real world of external existence. Again, then, Reality is the subject of our judgment.

We will take one more illustration. What is the subject of the judgment when we say, All men are mortal, or man is mortal? Not certainly all existing men; for the statement covers not them only, but all men who have ever lived, and all men who ever will live; nay, all possible or conceivable men. The judgment would be just as true if an angel uttered it immediately after the last of the race had ceased to exist. The subject once more is Reality. The judgment does not assert or necessarily imply that a single man actually exists. It is hypothetical; it means, if man, then mortal. We are asserting again an invariable conjunction of attributes. The proposition means: Such is the real nature of things, or such is the structure of Reality, or briefly, Reality is such, that given human nature there you will always find the attribute mortality. The judgment, therefore, is a judgment concerning Reality. This seems all plain and simple enough. All our judgments refer directly or indirectly to Reality; and their truth and falsehood are qualities of the relation of our ideas, not to one another, but to Reality.

Reality, accordingly, is not affected in any way by our judgment as such; but, on the contrary, our minds in making the judgment submit to the control of Reality. In this manner the true state of the case is convincingly demonstrated by Mr Bradley; namely, that every judgment is a judgment concerning something real, concerning some fact or event in real existence, or concerning some conjunction of attributes or qualities invariably found in Reality. To go back to our first illustration, the whole complex idea *cloud-obscuring-sun* is the real predicate; and the event, the particular happening out there in space, is the subject to which reference is made in the judgment.

Again, in the act of judgment ideas are not used as

psychical facts or events in our mind, but merely as symbols. It is evident that the idea which we use as the predicate of a judgment is not our mental state as such. We do not, of course, transfer our ideas or mental images as psychical facts to Reality when we perform an act of judgment upon it. "The whale is a mammal." In making this statement I am not, says Mr Bradley, qualifying real whales with my mammal image ; for that belongs to me and is an event of my history. And unless I am Jonah, he facetiously adds, it cannot enter into an actual whale. The idea used as a predicate is used only in respect of its *meaning*, and as such is referred away from its existence as a psychical fact or event in any particular mind that happens to perform the act of judgment. It becomes, as we say, adjectival or universal and is thus used to indicate some facts or quality of the real.

Two conclusions, then, are evident. First, every act of judgment has reference, direct or indirect, to Reality. Truth and falsehood are qualities of the relation of our ideas to Reality, not of the relation of our ideas among themselves. And secondly, not to act on Reality in order to alter it, but to submit to its control so as to be able to report accurately concerning it, is the true function of judgment. We do not change, nor do we seek to change, and we do not in any way use Reality, when we say, The cloud obscures the sun ; or Gold is yellow ; or Man is mortal. We are only giving a report concerning it. All this we think is self evident, and perfectly clear.

After the foregoing brief exposition of the essential nature of what we term an act of judgment, then, it will be easy to perceive what is really meant when we speak of the search for truth. Our aim in such a search is not volitional, not practical in the sense of endeavouring to act causally on the Real, so as to alter it in any way, in order to make it answer some purpose we have in view ; but rather, by submitting ourselves to its control, to place ourselves in a position to acquire correct knowledge

of it, and thus to pronounce true judgments concerning it. All our scientific observations and experiments,¹ all our historical and other inquiries, all our efforts of whatever kind to reach truth, are directed to this end, they do not aim to change Reality, but to know it. Obvious as this may seem yet it is seriously called in question by the pragmatist. For instance, a writer in the *Hibbert Journal* asks "What is meant in science, in pragmatic philosophy, by explaining? What is the function of a theory? How does pragmatic science deal with realities and with truth?" For reply he quotes an utterly false and inappropriate metaphor used by Prof. James, namely, that in the intellectual life "we harness perceptual reality in concepts in order to drive it better to our ends." And so this writer tells us that science "uses theories as the most suitable harness which can be made by us for keeping teams of facts together and driving them to a place where fresh facts wait to be added to the team, etc."² And he adds he is sure all students of natural science would admit this to be their practice. We should, we confess, be immensely surprised if students of natural science were to admit anything of the sort. We are quite sure that students of astronomy, for instance, do not attempt to harness "perceptual reality," to wit the planets and the stars of the milky way, to anything, or to drive them or any facts about them any where. Such an idea we are quite sure never entered the brain of a Kepler or a Newton. No one, it seems to us, but a fanatical pragmatist, would ever dream of attributing such a mad purpose to science. It almost looks like pragmatism become temporarily insane. The pursuit of scientific knowledge is one thing, the practical application, where possible, of such knowledge to the uses of human life

¹ Even our scientific experiments, as in chemistry, are not, of course, performed with the intention of altering Reality, but only to ascertain its true nature.

² *Hibbert Journal*, July 1912, p. 827.

is, of course, quite another. Not to alter Reality, not to drive it anywhere, or to do anything to it, but to submit to it with a view to correct knowledge of it, is the purpose of science and the real function of the intellect. By such submission alone can we rightly explore and bring a true report of it. It is this attitude of humble and dutiful submission that is of the very essence of the scientific spirit, constituting its peculiar merit ; and is the surest evidence of the existence of an intellectual interest pure and simple. We are of opinion this is so evident that there is no need to dwell on it any longer, and so we will pass on.

We have already pointed out that in our first encounters with Reality, in our first perception and cognition of it, we do not apprehend it in its own proper or absolute nature. We encounter it at first in parts, aspects, or fragments, broken up into relations of space and time, with differences and resemblances, which result in imperfect, tentative, rough and ready classifications on our part. But in order to arrive at its fundamental or essential character our first experiences have to be criticized, sifted, and more or less transmuted. The need life experiences perpetually to readjust itself to its environment has led to the development of the ideal or relational element in consciousness, till a stage in mental evolution is reached when the environment, or what we call Nature, is discerned to have a structure of its own, and becomes the subject of inquiry on its own account, and so what we distinctively call the intellectual interest is born. The evolution of this interest, this desire to know the truth of Nature, *i.e.* of external Reality for its own sake, can quite well be traced notwithstanding the protests of the pragmatist. There has been a mutation or transfiguration of the ideal or thinking side of experience, and out of the earlier necessity the mind was under to cognize the real on utilitarian grounds has issued philosophy and science, *i.e.* the desire to know the first

principles of things, to understand the universe, not merely piecemeal, but as a whole.

That we are under necessity to judge appearances is, then, beyond question. We do not accept any and every appearance as real, as we do not accept every statement about Reality as true, exactly in the form in which it is presented to us. We all know how deceptive appearances are, and how often what we are told is untrue. Neither persons nor things are in their real character always what they seem. Illusions, deceptions, mistakes, superstitions, hallucinations—the world is full of them. From his earliest appearance on the earth man has been more or less struggling to free himself from them. It must then be admitted that we are thus placed under an inevitable necessity to judge both appearances that claim to be real, and statements about Reality that claim to be true. But to do so we must have a criterion. To deny the existence of a criterion, and to assume the attitude of absolute scepticism or absolute credulity, is impossible. Even scepticism must have some positive ground to stand upon when it doubts, and credulity some crude reason why it believes. Blank scepticism and blank credulity there cannot be. Well, then we have and must have a criterion of some sort, explicit or implicit, when we believe anything to be true and real. The only question is, therefore, what sort of criterion it shall be ; shall it or shall it not be rational. If our beliefs are to be rational, then there can be but one criterion, and that criterion must be beyond doubt ; in other words, it must be absolute and infallible. If there be no criterion, and no absolute and infallible criterion, how can you say anything at all about the appearances of things ? That there must be a criterion, and that this criterion must be one and absolute, is the same thing as to say that in our judgments we must be rational. Now there can be no doubt what our intellectual criterion is, for we are always employing it ; we assume, we cannot help assuming,

that what is discrepant and contradictory cannot be judged to be real or true. When, says Mr Bradley, statements are made about Reality you cannot remain quite passive ; you cannot take the position that any and every nonsense is true, truth absolute and entire, at least as far as you know. If, then, you discriminate at all between truth and falsehood, you will find you cannot accept open self-contradiction. Hence to think is to judge, to judge is to criticize, and to criticize is to use a criterion of reality, and to doubt this would surely be mere blindness or confused self-deception.¹ But if we reject the inconsistent as being appearance only, not Reality, we are applying a positive knowledge of the ultimate nature of things. And so we are compelled to this result, namely, that the Ultimate Reality is such that it does not *contradict itself*, and there is, therefore, an absolute criterion. But why must it be absolute? Because, Mr Bradley replies, you cannot endeavour to deny it or even to doubt it, without tacitly assuming its validity. Anyone, rejecting this criterion, can only do so by employing it ; he can only reject it, that is to say, because, if he employs it, it will collide with something else, with the demands of some other function of his being ; to wit, his faith, his hopes, his wishes, to which, as did Newman, he resolves to give the primacy. But in rejecting it he is, of course, standing on it all the time, *i.e.* he refuses to employ the standard because, if he did employ it, it would be *inconsistent*, it would *collide* with the demands of his faith, etc. But it would be foolish to labour a fact so self-evident as this ; further attempt at exposition would only succeed in making turbid what is already, we think, in itself transparently clear.

And now let us seek still further to see how we have in this ultimate and absolute criterion of truth a genuine, a positive, and infallible revelation of the nature of the Perfect Experience. It has been objected that even if

¹ "Appearance and Reality," p. 136.

this criterion be admitted to be final and supreme, absolute, as we say, can this after all be regarded as giving us any real and *positive* information about the ultimate nature of things ; can it fairly, without straining and extravagance, be said to give us anything of real value in the way of actual knowledge of the Absolute ? Now if the reply to this question has to be in the affirmative, then agnosticism, it should be noted, so far is refuted ; since it must be conceded that we certainly have some clear and definite knowledge of the Absolute ; and of the Absolute not only as it is for us, as it appears in relation to our finite intelligence, but as it is in itself, as it is in its own proper character. Well, is our knowledge of the Ultimate Reality, as is so often asserted, purely relative, or is it real, is it intrinsic, is it absolute ? Let us see. The objection says in effect as follows : When you tell us that according to your criterion the Absolute rejects the inconsistent, the self-contradictory, have you, after all, presented us with anything more than a bare negation ? Have you told us anything more about the Absolute except simply what it is not ? what it does not contain ? what it will not accept ? It does not contain, so you say, the discrepant, it won't accept the self-contradictory. Let it be granted, then, that the ultimately Real does not admit the self-contradictory, is this, after all, anything more than a prohibition, the assertion of an absence ; that is to say, Reality prohibits self-contradiction, does not contain within itself the discrepant ? In denying inconsistency are you predicating any real quality, can you claim any positive knowledge ? Such is the objection. Let us hear Mr Bradley's reply. We confess that to us it comes with great force, in fact, with irresistible cogency. It is to the following effect. A bare denial is never possible. You cannot reject any assertion about Reality as untrue on the ground of *bare* ignorance of it, you must have some positive knowledge. You know what Reality *does*. You cannot admit this and then go

on to say that you do not know what Reality *is*. You admit that the standard exists, and you know how it acts ; it rejects inconsistency. But surely this gives us more than mere negative knowledge. I cannot see, says Mr Bradley, how, when I observe a thing at work, I am to stand there and to say that I know nothing of its nature. Surely a function cannot be said to be bare negation, and equivalent to nothing at all. Even if it were to be admitted that such knowledge were useless, or did not give us the information we were most anxious to obtain, still it is not the same as total ignorance. We do then know something positive about the Absolute ; we know how it functions ; we see it at work ; and we do obtain in this manner true information. We have, therefore, so far a genuine, an authoritative, and an infallible disclosure or revelation of its nature. And so it seems to us, this once for all settles conclusively the question of agnosticism. We have positive knowledge, infallible knowledge, of the nature of the Ultimate Reality.

But let us proceed. The standard denies inconsistency and therefore asserts consistency. The inconsistent is unreal, and so we are just as sure that the consistent is so far real, that Reality therefore is consistent. But on the other hand all appearances, however imperfect or even false, yet must be appearances of something and of something real. All appearances, however distorted, false, or evil, cannot be appearances of nothing at all. They cannot, therefore, be bodily shelved and got rid of, thrust into some limbo of pure negation or blank nonentity. They must fall somewhere, Mr Bradley reminds us, and must somehow belong to the real. But if this is so, then we have to admit that it is the character of Reality to possess every appearance ultimately in some harmonious form. How much alteration and rearrangement, how much correction, how much supplementing, any false or imperfect appearance may require, we may not be able to show in detail ; but somehow, says Mr Bradley, the

bewildering mass of phenomenal diversity must be at unity, must be self-consistent ; for it cannot be elsewhere than in Reality, and Reality excludes ultimate discord. Evil and error, which, as partial and imperfect appearances are both of the same nature, are not final, are not absolute. They do not stand outside Reality in some inconceivable world of their own. They are characters of the finite forms of existence in space and time, and they are relative ; and their relativity is discerned by philosophy. But this relative character of error and evil is also the ground of that invincible hope and belief religion never ceases to entertain of their ultimate transmutability. For it is just in their relativity that religion discerns both the need and also the possibility of atonement ; atonement or reconciliation being possible and necessary only for what is relative, and not for what is absolute. The relative or imperfect appearance of things exists to be transmuted. This is its very nature. But the Absolute remains the same in its essential character for evermore. " And I beheld all things," says St Augustine, " that are beneath Thee, and I saw that they are neither wholly real nor wholly unreal ; they are real so far as they came from Thee, they are unreal because they are not what Thou art. For that alone is truly real which abides unchanged. . . . And to Thee there is no such thing as evil, and even to Thy creation as a whole there is not, because there is nothing beyond it that can burst in and destroy the law (*i.e.* the harmony) Thou hast imposed upon it. In details there are things which because they suit not some parts, are counted evil, yet these same things suit other parts, and are good to them and are good in themselves."¹ So, then, Reality is One, and it has a positive character, embracing all things somehow in an inclusive harmony. Such is the nature of the Ultimate Reality as disclosed in the criterion of truth.

The question, it will be remembered, which we set our-

¹ "Confessions," Bk. vii. chaps. xi.-xiii.

selves to answer was whether or not the Perfect Experience which religion seeks actually exists, *i.e.* whether or not it is real. Perfect Experience we found to be one in which there is no ultimate conflict or discord, which must, therefore, be absolute and somehow all-inclusive. The answer of the intellect to the question as to the ultimate nature of the real is, we have seen, given in the functioning of its criterion of truth. This criterion is no product of the merely utilitarian or pragmatic activity of the mind, but, as we have seen, is rooted in and is a demand of the Absolute functioning in us ; and the nature of the Absolute thus revealed is seen to be a perfect, all-inclusive, harmonious Experience. In this manner, then, does the Intellect justify the Heart in its quest of Absolute Perfection. The Absolute posited, so to speak, by religion as the object of its quest, is found to be identical in nature with the Absolute as revealed by the intellect in its criterion of Truth. For both the Absolute is One, is all-inclusive, is a perfectly harmonious Experience, and is real.

We are justified, however, in taking a further step. This principle of consistency, which, as we have now seen, must be regarded as the final criterion of all that claims truth and reality, the demand for which is nothing less than the functioning of the Absolute in all rational thought, compels us to regard the Absolute as ultimately Spirit, and therefore as a Self. Mr Bradley at the end of his book conducts us to the conclusion that Reality is one Experience, self-pervading and superior to mere relations. Its character, he remarks, is the opposite of that fabled extreme which is merely mechanical or material, it is in the end the sole perfect realization of Spirit. " We may," he says, " fairly close this work by insisting that Reality is spiritual . . . and outside of Spirit there is not and cannot be any reality, and the more anything is spiritual the more is it veritably real." ¹

¹ "Appearance and Reality," p. 552.

But to be Spiritual and to be one is what we mean by a Self. We do not say that the Absolute is a Person, because, as we have said, so far as we understand the legitimate significance of the word Person, it always imports finitude. It is, we hold, properly employed only where we distinguish the *I* from a *Thou*; it has, therefore, always a social reference, a mutually exclusive or negative meaning towards other selves. The Absolute, therefore, as all-inclusive cannot be said without contradiction to be a Person, but may, we contend, accurately be termed in respect of its spirituality and unity a Perfect Self. Thus, working along these lines, investigating in the foregoing manner the profound metaphysical significance of the criterion of truth, we find we have arrived at precisely the same conclusion respecting the fundamental nature of the Absolute as was long ago reached by the Vedanta seers of India. After age-long meditation, extending through millenniums, in the retirement of those ancient forests wherein their wonderful sessions were held, and where the profoundest questions concerning the nature of man and the reality of things were pondered and discussed, the ancient Rishis discerned that life and all things had their source and ground in one all-inclusive, absolute Self. "That which is the subtle essence," say the Upanishads, "in it all that exists has its self. It is the True. It is the Self. And, O Svetaketu, that art thou." And again, "O friend! remember thy full self. *Thou art Brahman*, the ground of existence, the All." And the consciousness of this identity is an experience of such joy and blessedness as to surpass by far all that the world has to give for "a particle of its bliss supplies the bliss of the whole universe, everything becomes enlightened in Its light; nay, all else appears worthless after a sight of that essence; I am indeed this supreme and eternal Brahman." And now in these more recent years, as we have seen, a profound Western thinker in the person of Prof. Ladd is uttering

the same message concerning the nature of the Ultimate Reality. What sort of real being, he asks, must the Absolute be, in order to constitute the sole, ultimate principle of becoming, *i.e.* of evolution ? And the answer he gives is : “ Only an Absolute Self, whose essential and unchanging characteristics are those of a rational and free Spirit, can fulfil the required conditions.”

Religion, then, we conclude is on no vain quest ; but seeks an object that is eternally real. And this eternal reality, reason when rightly questioned proclaims to be an all-inclusive and perfect Self.

CHAPTER IX

CAN WE EXPERIENCE THE PERFECT?

(I) THE NATURE OF THE SELF AS GIVEN IN INTROSPECTION

WE now enter upon the most important part of our task, and the vital issues of our inquiry will become more and more apparent as we proceed. Having ascertained that the real object of religion's quest, the final goal of its striving, is The Perfect; and having also, not we hope without success, by our inquiry into what is the legitimate function of the rational faculty, and what its true significance in human nature, discovered that it reveals, not only the reality, but also the actual presence and control of the Absolute within the finite intelligence, the actual presence and control, that is to say, of that Eternal Spirit or Perfect Self in whom there is no final conflict, discrepancy, or contradiction, we have now to inquire into the possibility of the finite self or ego directly and immediately experiencing that Perfection. The finite self, we have said, in religion seeks the Perfect. We have now to ask whether the religious instinct is moving towards an experience in which the finite ego will itself become the Perfect, thus losing its finite individuality; or whether religion is moving towards an experience in which the finite ego will possess in feeling and vision that Absolute Perfection without itself ceasing to be finite. As we have previously said, we seek to discover if to experience the Perfect means of necessity to become the Perfect Experience, in other words, if the finite is seeking in religion to be re-absorbed into the Infinite whence it came; seeking, that

is, completely to lose its finite individuality in the undistinguished unity of the Absolute.

There is a phase of religious thought, essentially pantheistic, to be met with not only in the East but in the West as well, which regards ultimate dissolution in the abysmal depths of the Infinite Life as the inevitable goal of all things finite. For, according to this pantheistic scheme of the universe, to be finite is to be imperfect, and all that is imperfect is of necessity but transitory, belonging to "the fashion of this world which passeth away." Indeed, the source and very essence of all our suffering, of all we call evil, lies in our finitude. Consequently, there is only one way of escape from misery, pain, and sin; every barrier or limit that marks us off and distinguishes us from everything else must be melted down and dissolved so that we may become in being and consciousness co-extensive, so to speak, with the Life of the Infinite. The *I* and the *Thou*, the *This* and the *That*, must alike disappear, so that only the Eternal, the Perfect, the Infinite, the Absolute One shall remain. We are thus each no more than the dewdrop which at last slips into the shining sea; or a fleck of cloud in the empyrean, appearing for a moment only to pass away again leaving no trace behind; or as a Japanese poet expresses it:

"Rain and hail and ice and snow,
Neither like the other. So!
When they melt, however, lo!
See one stream of water flow."¹

Thus, then, the result of the long effort of the religious quest is, according to this view of things, absorption once more into the divine essence, the return of the finite ego to the Infinite whence originally it came. And so religion presents itself as the crowning paradox of existence, it tells us that in order to be *saved* we must be *lost* in God. Is this, then, really the destiny of the finite? Or, to put it once more in our own way, is to experience the

¹ Quoted in "Sermons of a Buddhist Abbot," Soyen Shaku, p. 28.

Perfect after all really synonymous with being the Perfect Experience ?

To answer this question it is quite evident we must carry further still our inquiry into the real nature of what we call a Self. We have to ask, and, if we can, to answer, the question whether it be true that to be finite is of necessity to be imperfect or evil ; whether there is not some misreading of our nature in this pantheistic interpretation of it ; in other words, whether it is true that in order to experience the Perfect we must *be* The Perfect. To the answering of this question the next four chapters will be devoted. And the vital importance to religion of a satisfactory answer is so manifest, that we think no excuse or apology is needed for what might otherwise be deemed the undue length of the discussion. It will, then, be our purpose to inquire whether there is not some fallacy lurking in the foregoing pantheistic interpretation of the nature of the finite self, and if so, what that fallacy is. And we shall conduct our inquiry in no merely *à priori* fashion, but by a direct appeal to concrete experience itself as the only possible method of solving the problem.

Let us then, in the first place, perform a simple act of introspection. Now it is one of the distinguishing features of the developed mentality of man that he is able deliberately to turn in upon himself, to look at and to inspect his own mental states, activities, and processes, somewhat as he can perceive and examine the objects, their movements and changes, in the world around him. Now what is the significance of this apparently very simple, very familiar, and yet withal very notable power possessed by the human mind ? Let us suppose ourselves mentally to view any immediate feeling of which we may chance for a moment to be conscious. It may be some sense immediacy, a physical pain such as the aching of a tooth, or the prick of a pin ; it may be some taste of sweetness, or a flash of light ; or it may be some emotional immediacy such as love or fear, hope or despondency.

Having selected our immediate feeling, whatever its quality, let us suppose ourselves mentally to look at it so as to be able to describe it ; to look at it, not as the psychologist does from the outside, but to view it from within, from what is sometimes called the psychic point of view ; from the point of view, that is to say, of the subject whose experience it is. We are each of us able more or less perfectly to perform such an act as this, otherwise, of course, we should not be able to describe what we feel and to communicate the information to others. Such a power of self-inspection and self-description is in truth implicated in all our psychological science and in all our social intercourse. Now a very important fact is evident and indisputable in every such act of reflection, namely, that the immediate feeling, whatever it may be, is not only an experience, but experience-*ed* ; it is not merely a feeling, but it is a feeling that is also *felt*. In other words, it is *owned*. Now the owner is not another feeling, nor as is sometimes asserted any indefinable feeling mass, which would also in its turn need an owner, but some one who feels it. To use the language of grammar, there is not only an adjective, but there is also a substantive which it qualifies. There is the *I* that feels, and this *I*, this *ego*, this *self*, this *substantive*, this *owner*, can be distinguished, though not separated, from its various qualities, states, and processes. So much, we take it, any simple act of introspection, which each one of us is capable of performing, establishes, beyond all reasonable doubt. Your account of the mind, therefore, will be inadequate, will be an abstraction from the total experience if this aspect of it be ignored or denied. To leave it out is to mutilate experience, and in consequence to fall into hopeless error and endless confusion. That I can thus view my own immediate experience is, then, not to be questioned.

Now though I can and do by introspection view my own immediate experiences, I do not by the process

thrust them outside me, in a manner similar to that in which, according to emanational philosophers, God extruded the world and man from his own substance, and so is supposed to be able now to observe, know, and act upon them from without. These immediate feelings do not become external to the mind by the act of reflection or introspection. They are objects indeed, but objects of quite a different order from the external objects of the spatial world. Nor again does a feeling, or any sort of mental process, when thus inwardly viewed, become what is logically termed an abstract quality, an adjective or mere "what," floating, so to speak, loose from its existence, ready on occasion to clothe a subject. This is all very evident to any one who performs this commonplace psychological experiment upon himself. The feeling or immediate experience I inwardly view is still *my* feeling, *my* experience; it is what has been appropriately termed, not merely an object, like the objects in space, but a subject-object. By this is meant that I as subject am still present in the feeling as thus objectively regarded; and the feeling attended to is identical with the feeling as immediately felt. If, then, we are asked the question, how immediate experience can become an object, and if confronted with logical objections to the possibility of such a process,¹ our reply would have to be in the words of the Latin proverb—*Solvitur ambulando*. And when we thus become empirical in the fullest sense, when we take the whole fact, we discover, as we have already said, that every feeling is also felt, that it is owned by some subject or ego. Without the ego the act of introspection would no doubt be a mystery and a contradiction. But take in the subject, and so far from its being any mystery, it discovers itself to be the fundamental experience, which, as we have already had occasion to note, supplies us with the ultimate principle of interpretation of all other perplexing mysteries, even that of

¹ As does Mr Bradley, "Essays on Truth and Reality," chap. vi.

the Absolute itself. This simple act of introspection then, we contend, is of itself sufficient to disclose the presence in experience of the ego or self as the subject or owner of its various states and activities, and therefore not to be confounded with them.

If, then, in all experience, even in its simplest and most elementary stages, there must be some subject that owns it or that it qualifies, then it must to some extent at least be objective to that subject, and its objectivity will be one of its essential features. Every immediate experience, and, in truth, every state or activity of consciousness, no matter of what sort it may be, will be object to some subject, that is to say, there will be some one who owns it, some self or ego it qualifies, and by whom it is experienced, felt, cognized or known.

A state of consciousness, without any trace of objectivity, *i.e.* which no one owned, which no one experienced, of which no one was aware ; in other words, a purely abstract state, could not possibly exist. This we take to be a psychological fact beyond dispute. A feeling must be objective, it must be felt, it must be more or less cognized, some one must be aware of it, in order that it may be a feeling at all. What we call introspection, reflection, or self-consciousness, therefore, is not an entirely new mental activity attained by the human mind, and exclusively characteristic of it, as distinguished from all lower forms of mentality ; but is really no more than the developed and deepened form of that primitive awareness, or aspect of objectivity, which must be supposed to characterise all sentient life from the very lowest and earliest forms upwards, and implies the reality of some subject or self as distinguished from its experiences, without which, as we have said, there could be no experience of any sort whatever.

If the foregoing exposition of what is meant or implied when we speak of the self or ego as the subject of experience be correct, it is quite evident that psychologists,

be they absolutists like Mr Bradley, or pluralists like Wm. James, who deny the reality of the transcendental ego, must inevitably fall into endless difficulty and confusion whenever they undertake to discuss or explain to us what from their point of view the real subject of experience must be taken to be. That there is a subject cannot, of course, be denied. To say that there may be a feeling that is not felt, of which no one is aware, would, of course, be absurd. To banish all personal pronouns—the *I* and *mine*, the *we* and *ours*—from their vocabulary is out of the question. What, then, is to be done with them? How are they to be explained? What meaning is to be attached to them in the absence of the transcendental or identical ego? Necessarily, there is only one course open, namely, to reduce them to signify some one or more of our abstract feelings or feeling states. The subject, the ego, the self shall be declared to be no more than some feeling or series of feelings; some *mass of feeling*; *the whole of feeling*; *the cœnæsthesis* or general feeling of the body; *the background of feeling* out of which special feelings stand in order to be felt, perceived, attended to. Even the Absolute must be spoken of in abstract fashion, as a sort of infinite adjective; not as a Perfect Self, but as a perfect, harmonious, inclusive Experience. And so it is feeling that perceives feeling, attends to feeling, is aware of feeling. Quite naturally and inevitably in such a psychology the perplexing question concerning the “*how*” of such a process arises. How can feeling be said to feel feeling; how can a feeling feel itself? Or how can one feeling feel or become aware of another feeling? And, again, how can any special feeling stand out from the background so as to be inspected or cognized by the rest of feeling or by the cœnæsthesis? Such a pluralistic psychology, abstracting thus from the identical ego or permanent subject, renders, not only the act of introspection and all reflective processes, but also all our mental states and activities of whatever sort quite unintelligible.

If we would see what a hopeless tangle of difficulties even an eminent psychologist finds himself involved in by refusing to recognize the reality of the ego or self as the subject of consciousness, we could not do better than turn to the case of the late Wm. James. In his book, entitled "A Pluralistic Universe," he makes a detailed confession of these difficulties so frank and instructive, as to be well worth our while to call attention to it here. His case is eminently typical of the failure of psychology to render any intelligible account of experience without the recognition of the metaphysical or identical self. He tells us that over the difficulty how many consciousnesses can be also one consciousness, how one and the same identical fact can experience itself so diversely, he struggled sincerely and patiently for years, covering hundreds of sheets of paper with notes, memoranda, and discussions with himself. But all his struggles, he confesses, were in vain, and he found himself at last in an *impasse*. He frankly acknowledges he had either to forswear that "psychology without a soul" to which his whole psychological and Kantian education had committed him, or else confess the problem insoluble. But to revert to the theory of a soul as a distinct agent, which knows its mental states, was not a procedure to be thought of, seeing he had for so long and so completely renounced it. Besides, to acknowledge the soul's substantial reality would inevitably imperil his whole pluralistic philosophy. It would be to take the first and decisive step in the direction of transcendentalism. By such an acknowledgment he would plant his foot on that slippery metaphysical slope at the logical bottom of which would be awaiting him the abyss of that very absolutism he so much abhorred. Well, in such a psychological predicament what was to be done? Could he keep his logic and still renounce his belief in his soul? With what seems to us true psychological and philosophical insight James saw he could not. The logic of identity,

in other words our rationality, rests on, is indeed radically implicated with, the reality of the identical ego or soul. To keep the one whilst rejecting the other will be found in the long run to be a metaphysical position so manifestly inconsistent and absurd as to be altogether untenable. He had, therefore, so he tells us, to make his choice; and either to forswear logic once for all, or else, if he kept it, to accept as essentially implicated with it the reality of the identical self or ego. For if he should elect to stand by logic he could not of course refrain from applying logic to life with the view to rendering it intelligible. But the result of any attempt to apply logic to concrete living experience whilst repudiating the reality of the soul or ego must of necessity end in the confession that life is incapable of any rational interpretation. The dilemma is almost tragic in its acuteness and the vastness of the metaphysical issues dependent upon it. Life, he acknowledges, without a soul is, to use his own expression, "logically irrational." But as it would be intolerable to concede for a moment the reality of the transcendental ego or soul even for the sake of making life rational, why not let us away with this embarrassing logic too?

Now this is a most interesting piece of mental autobiography which Wm. James unfolds to us. The alternative to which he tells us he was reduced is inevitable. There is indeed a most intimate and vital connection between the unitary ego and our rational nature. Without the transcendental ego reason has no significance and no support. *Vice versa*, degrade or restrict the function of reason, reject its absolute authority, and by implication you have surrendered the permanent reality of the transcendental ego also. For it is necessary to insist that the authority of reason and the identity of the transcendental ego must stand or fall together; since reason is nothing more or less than one of the highest self-revealing activities of the identical ego, a revelation of its eternal nature and reality. The authority of

reason and the reality of the ego are therefore as inseparable as function and organ, and you cannot retain the one whilst renouncing the other. Out of the principle of identity, as we have seen, the categories, unities, laws blossom whereby we seek to apprehend in thought the reality which underlies all the rich diversity of the universe. The principle of identity is accordingly the very heart and soul of reason or logic in all its forms, concrete or abstract. And the activity of what we call our reason or logical faculty is nothing more or less than the functioning of the identical ego, and the revelation, as we have said, of its true nature. But further, reason would have no meaning and no authority if it were or could be no more than the activity of an independent, isolated, finite ego. And so, as we also saw, we had in the end to acknowledge in the functioning of reason the presence and active control within the finite ego of the ultimate Identity of the universe, the all-inclusive Absolute Self. Admit, then, the identity of the ego, and you cannot, you have no right to degrade reason to an exclusively pragmatic or utilitarian function. So much, we think, is self-evident. Well, James saw and frankly admitted this; and so, having already parted with his soul, he found himself compelled consistently and logically, as the last act and deed of his expiring rationality, to give up logic too, to give it up, as he says, *fairly, squarely, irrevocably*. And now with no soul and no logic to trouble him he was free, free, we presume, to accept any inconsistency as true, provided only it was useful or would work well. And so in the enjoyment of this great liberty wherewith pragmatism had set him free, he embraced, with no fear of further qualms from his logical conscience, M. Bergson's view, namely, "that reality is where things happen, all temporal reality without exception." He could, necessarily, no longer find any other reality than, as he expresses it, "the distributed and strung-along, flowing sort of reality

which we finite beings swim in.”¹ And yet it cannot escape notice that notwithstanding this strenuous effort to submerge the transcendental ego in the flowing real, “we finite beings” are still there and have somehow managed to keep our heads above the flood. Though, perhaps, we should be unfair to insist on consistency where logic has been so irrevocably renounced, nevertheless it is important to note that the ego simply has not been got rid of, but is still distinguishable from the flowing real in which it is said to swim. However, with the ego and rationality both finally abandoned for good and all, James, like M. Bergson, believed he had attained to philosophic peace in *the soulless reality of everlasting change*; change with nothing that changes and with no conceivable rational goal. We have adduced this confession of Wm. James’s because it seems to us conclusive evidence of the futility, the hopeless absurdity of endeavouring by the renunciation of both reason and the ego, which, as we have said, must in the end stand or fall together, to attempt to render any intelligible exposition of what we mean when we speak of reality.

In Wm. James and Mr Bradley it will now be seen we have two eminently typical thinkers, who, taken together, offer us a highly interesting and also most instructive study of the difficulties and perplexities in which so much of our modern speculative thought becomes involved by ignoring or denying the reality of the transcendental ego as the subject of experience. It will, therefore, be well worth our while to dwell for just a moment or two longer on the hopeless embarrassments which beset both these philosophers alike, who, agreeing in their rejection of the self as unreal, attempt to explain what from their respective points of view reality is. They are the most prominent representatives of the two opposing schools of contemporary philosophical

¹ “Pluralistic Universe,” p. 213.

thought that at the present time are pressing their separate claims upon our acceptance, namely, Pluralism or Pragmatism on the one hand, and Absolutism on the other. Yet both these thinkers, though, of course, in their different ways, exhibit the same philosophical dilemma, namely, how without the reality of the self you can claim to have any reality at all. Both, as we have said, discard the reality of the self, and thereby cut themselves off from the one only source and root whence is derived the fundamental principle or concept of unity in diversity by which alone the universe is capable of rational interpretation. For once reject the unity of the substantial ego amid its changing states and activities, of which, so we maintain, each of us has a direct and immediate acquaintance, and identity has no longer any meaning, truth no criterion, and all intelligible significance evaporates from such metaphysical expressions as the One in the Many, Sameness in Difference, or Unity in Diversity. And again, both these thinkers by their rejection of the reality of the ego become of necessity psychological pluralists; that is to say, the unity of experience falls asunder in their hands, and the mind is reduced to a congeries, a "heap," an association of perceptions, ideas, etc., or to a series of psychical events, a stream of consciousness; or at best to a mere feeling-mass or *cœnæsthesis*, as they call it, from which items of consciousness in some way are said to break forth and become detached as objects of perception. The inevitable result of such a view of the mind is seen in that there is no possible room left for the real logic of concrete experience, and the only function remaining to the intellect or reason consists in the activity of the purely abstract or conceptual understanding. And so these two justly-famed thinkers present us, as we have said, each in his own way, with an extremely interesting and also useful study in the history of modern speculative thought, warning us of the serious philo-

sophical perils we incur if, as is so much the fashion nowadays, we inconsiderately repudiate the reality of the transcendental ego or self. As you peruse the controversy between these two protagonists of their respective philosophies, it is impossible not to be struck with the fact that each is invincible in attack, but as impotent in defence. Mr Bradley's absolutism is exposed to the fatal indictment that, having repudiated the identical ego, it is left with no intelligible principle of real unity; and though he repeatedly asserts that the Absolute *is* an all-inclusive harmony, the question as to *how* this can be is left in a most dubious position, hanging, so to speak, in the air, an unsolved and insoluble enigma. We may, he assures us, say that everything that appears is *somehow* real in such a way as to be self-consistent, and that the bewildering mass of phenomenal diversity must *somehow* be at unity. But when we would turn our thought inward upon our own direct experience of personal identity for the principle wherewith to solve the problem as to how diversity can be consistent with unity, he tells us it is of no avail. In the self, he admits, there is variety, and there is likewise unity, but if we attempt to understand how this is or can be, we fall, so he says, into inconsistencies, which, therefore, cannot be truth. And so in this state of hopeless incomprehensibility reality is left for us by Mr Bradley.¹ But when, on the other hand, we turn to Pluralism we fare no better—nay, even worse. Wm. James, as we have seen, not only repudiates the reality of the transcendental ego, but—and in this he is more consistent than Mr Bradley—discards reason also except in so far as its purely pragmatic or utilitarian function is concerned. And thus the world of experience becomes, so to speak, purely adjectival. There is no subject that owns its various qualities or activities, but these abstract qualities or adjectives are themselves the sole

¹ See "Appearance and Reality," pp. 140, 160, and 118.

owners and agents. There is no subject that is conscious, but only consciousness itself in the abstract. Cognition, he says, is a function of *consciousness*. And he then supposes the existence of one little isolated feeling he names Ω left swinging, so to speak, *in vacuo*, as if it had been produced by the direct creative fiat of a god, and he proceeds to show us how this feeling feels and how it gets to know. "A feeling feels," he says, "as a gun shoots. If there be nothing left to be felt or hit, they (*i.e.* these abstract separate feelings) discharge themselves *ins blaue hinein* (*i.e.* into vacancy). If, however, something starts up opposite them, they no longer simply shoot and feel, they hit and know."¹ Such is the epistemology of the mere psychologist. And the result of such a purely abstract psychological view of experience is, as we have seen, that the universe is reduced to a mere distributive, "strung-along, flowing sort of reality"; there is perpetual change, but nothing that changes; everlasting activity or movement, but towards no assignable goal; a universe that is incapable, and, in truth, needs no rational interpretation; in short, no real universe at all.

We think, then, it will be sufficiently evident that to repudiate the unchanging ego, of which each of us has a direct and intuitive experience amid his changing states and activities, and which alone supplies us with the one original norm and type of unity in diversity by which a rational interpretation of the universe is possible, turns out in the end to be by implication the repudiation of philosophy itself. Reason and the principle of identity, philosophy and the transcendental ego are, as we have said, inseparable as organ and function. Reject the one and you reject the other, and with such rejection all possibility of a rational interpretation of the universe vanishes. The only escape, therefore, from hopeless agnosticism is to return once

¹ "The Meaning of Truth," pp. 1, 3, 17.

more to the frank recognition of the reality of the identical or transcendental ego and all that it involves.

In contrast to these purely psychological and abstract views of the self or subject of experience, let us now turn to the deeper insight of such a thinker as Fichte. The Ego, according to Fichte, is conditional to all consciousness, no matter what particular form it may assume; it is the affirmation of self-identity. What, he inquires, is signified when any one speaks of himself as *I*? And he answers that every one who does so will find that "he *affirms himself*, or what may be clearer to many, *that he is at the same time subject and object*. In this absolute identity of subject and object consists the very nature of the Ego. The Ego is that which cannot be subject without being, in the same indivisible act, object—and cannot be object without being, in the same indivisible act, subject; and, conversely, whatever has this characteristic is Ego; the two expressions are the same."¹ This duality in unity is of the essence of the ego. Beyond this fact or deeper we cannot go. It is the essential fact present more or less distinctly, not only in human, but in all forms of experience whatsoever; and as such is the ground or principle of the explanation of everything else. What, therefore, is the principle by which all other experience is to be explained, you cannot, without manifestly contradicting yourself, demand should itself have an explanation. In all our attempts to interpret reality we must needs begin somewhere; we must start with some essential fundamental fact on which to take our stand, and which, as fundamental, itself requires, as it can receive, no support. Our only other alternative is to deny the existence of all first principles and become absolute sceptics like Hume. Well, in the essential nature of the ego as defined in the above quotation from Fichte, we submit we have such a first principle:

¹ Quoted by Adamson in his "Fichte," pp. 156-7.

a principle, namely, which constitutes the ground of all possible knowledge and experience whatever. Awareness, we have said, is a necessary factor in all experience. A sensation and the awareness of it must not be taken as being exactly the same thing. Awareness implies some degree of cognition, and cognition implies objectivity. And without objectivity, *i.e.* without awareness or cognition, there could be no experience. But objectivity also implies subjectivity, and so without this original and fundamental duality in unity no experience of any sort is possible.

The transcendental ego is, then, essential, is present more or less distinctly in all experience, and reveals itself as both subject and object even before reflection in this primitive and simple awareness. The first proof of this lies, of course, in introspection, and further evidence is found in the fact that it is necessarily implied in all knowledge and all experience from the lowest to the highest. Take any immediate experience you like—say, some pain like the toothache. The toothache you view is also yours; you are the object you view, and you are the subject that views it; that is to say, you are aware of what you feel. And what in this respect is true of you is true of all forms of life below you that experience similar sensations of pain and pleasure. They also are aware of what they feel. This fact of experience stands, as we have said, in no need, as also it is incapable of explanation. There is, then, the transcendental ego, which is both object and subject, in all experience; there is polarity, as it has been appropriately called, an essential duality of object and subject in the unity of the ego.

But it is also necessary further to observe that this principle of duality in unity implies, as Fichte says, a fundamental *activity* in all experience. No mental state is, or can be, purely passive or static. As he clearly saw, and as Kant saw somewhat vaguely before him

when he spoke of the ego as "the synthetic unity of apperception," there is this original, essential activity present in all experience, which consists in the positing by the ego of itself as object, to itself as subject, whilst remaining one with itself. This original and indispensable activity of all experience is disclosed in the lowest forms of consciousness in the fundamental fact of awareness; without which, as we have said, no experience, not even the simplest, is possible or conceivable. The ego principle is there in concrete form, dimly or clearly, active from the first. In more developed form it becomes the clear and definite fact of self-consciousness in man. In this, what has been called the second stage of consciousness, the ego can deliberately turn in upon itself, look at itself, reflect upon itself, and so know itself, praise or blame itself, and feel satisfaction or compunction and remorse as the case may be. In these expressions the term self denotes the ego regarded as its own object. It is, indeed, this duality or polarity of the ego in consciousness, by reason of which a man can oppose himself to himself, that makes it possible for him to be tempted and to resist temptation; in short, that makes him a developed moral and rational being. But, let it be carefully observed, this self-consciousness or knowledge of self is not, any more than is religious experience, an absolutely new element added on to him, it is only the developed or deepened form of what already existed from the beginning as that primitive awareness which we hold to be the essential cognitive factor present in all experience wherever found.

But we cannot stop here. As we must descend with our principle in order to interpret with it the lowest and earliest forms of conscious existence, so we must also ascend with it to the very highest. We must not, and need not, stop short of the highest experience of all, namely, the absolute, all-inclusive Self or Ego. This fundamental duality in unity, or polarity of experience,

some of the profoundest mystics and thinkers have discerned to be essential to the nature of the Perfect One. In this way they have been able to explain the harmony and ultimate unity of the apparent opposites—Mind and Matter, Extension and Thought—the relation between which always perplexes ordinary science and psychology. These are discerned to be correlatives, not sundered realities, and find their necessary unity and reconciliation in the Absolute Ego. There is, therefore, no need to seek a *deus ex machina* to bring them together. In the Absolute, mind or consciousness, as Hegel said, over-reaches this opposition of itself to that which is opposed to it as its object; or to put it another way, a self-conscious principle can reveal itself as a self-determined principle only in this extreme opposition and in overcoming it. In the Absolute Mind or Ego, then, the most extreme of all forms of this essential duality is overcome, and the apparent conflict between them brought to rest. Mind and Matter mark, so to speak, the extreme opposite poles in the experience of the Absolute Ego, they disclose the supreme form of that essential self-determining activity which we found to characterize all experience, that primal activity of the Ego whereby, whilst positing itself as object to itself as subject, it yet is never divided but remains one with itself throughout.

With these remarks, then, all too brief and inadequate on this most vital subject, we must now pass on, contenting ourselves with repeating once more that even in the simplest forms of experience open to our inspection we discover this element of awareness; and therein have disclosed, so we hold, the presence of the ego or subject; and that, in this way, in all experience, from the lowest to the highest, is revealed, to those who have eyes to see, more or less clearly, the ultimate nature of the Absolute Self.

Let us, then, sum up our conclusion thus far as to

what we mean by a self. We discover within us a subject, an identical self, that remains the same, one with itself, amid whatever changes of experience it may undergo. And when we say "*I myself*," we do not mean any single feeling; nor any series of psychical events or facts; nor any "whole of feeling with internal differences"; nor any slowly changing "feeling mass" or cœnæsthesiis, nor a bare abstract identity. We mean a universal, active, cognitive principle, non-temporal, present as subject owner or agent in all its changing states and activities, but never existing in abstraction or isolation. No immediate feeling without a subject; no subject without immediate feeling. Such is the nature of all experience. So far we hope we may have succeeded in carrying the reader along with us.

CHAPTER X

CAN WE EXPERIENCE THE PERFECT?—(*Continued*)

(2) THE NATURE OF THE SELF AS GIVEN IN MEMORY

WE have now to address ourselves to the difficult task of penetrating still further, if so we may, into those depths of meaning hidden within the self awaiting exploration ; and the fact that calls for attention and inquiry, next to that of the simple act of reflection or introspection, which we have just investigated, is the fact of memory. It is no doubt true that every form of finite consciousness, however simple it may be, implies some degree of memory. But our present inquiry is into the significance of that fully developed form which we usually denote when we speak of remembering our past. Familiar as every one is with this experience, which in itself seems so simple and obvious, yet it will be found to have vast and far-reaching implications, of which probably few of us are aware till we begin to ask certain questions concerning it.

We shall, therefore, have to make further demands on the thought and patience of the reader, as, for a short while, we seek to discover what more as to the nature of the self we learn from an inquiry into the significance of this mental power. Let us, then, consider for a moment the problem which memory presents.

What do we really mean when we say we can remember our past ? Psychology tells us memory is a representative power ; by which is meant that when we say we remember anything, some present state of consciousness, some

present idea, is taken by us to represent the past. But, granting this to be the case, how do we ascertain the fact? The past, of course, literally, is over and gone for ever, so far, that is, as the time-flow is concerned. And if, indeed, some feature in the present content of our consciousness does stand for the past, the puzzle is to explain how we know that it does so. How are these present marks, these present signs, of a past experience interpreted? Whence comes the knowledge that they point back to the past? How is it acquired? or is it acquired at all? The writing may be there, but then how do we ascertain the meaning of the cryptic symbols? Psychology used to say, in the case of external perception, that the senses receive impressions from objects, and so our ideas of them are copies of the originals. But the difficulty in such a case is obvious, namely, first, how we know our perceptions *are* such impressions, and then, if they are, that the copy and original are alike, unless we can get at the original as well as the copy, and so compare them together. We can never know that a man's portrait resembles him unless we have seen the man as well. But in that case the portrait is superfluous so far as getting to know what the man is like is concerned. So the theory that the mind receives impressions of objects as soft wax receives the imprint of the seal fell to the ground, and has long been quite discredited; since, of course, it implied the possession already of the very information the senses were said to supply. All this is evident on a little reflection; so psychology discovered it had been deceiving itself by the use of an entirely inappropriate metaphor. A similar sort of *petitio principii* misleads us in the case of memory. If you say that some present idea in your mind represents the past, that it is an exact copy, a sort of facsimile of it, then we must ask you how you have discovered this resemblance, be it ever so exact, seeing *ex hypothesi* the past is no more. It is all very well to speak of recalling, reproducing, or reinstating the past, as

psychology does¹; but all this is, of course, pure metaphor, with which we may deceive ourselves, but which really explains nothing. If we could perform such a contradiction as to recall, reinstate, recollect, that is collect again literally, past events and experiences, then, of course, it would not be needful that an idea or anything else in our present state of consciousness should stand for or represent them, since we should possess the originals themselves. Strictly speaking, what is past, in relation to the time stream, exists no more; and therefore cannot in a literal sense be re-called, re-produced, or re-collected. All this seems obvious enough when plainly stated; and yet the simplest facts of consciousness are often of the profoundest significance. And so it proves to be in the case before us. We grossly impose on ourselves, therefore, if we think to explain memory by simply saying it reproduces past events and experiences, which, of course, would mean that they all happened over again. Nor, on the other hand, can we say that present ideas in the mind represent them. Neither of these hypotheses explains the mystery.

Now psychology, as we have just intimated, in its perplexity and helplessness is almost certain in this case, as in that of external perception, to have recourse to some more or less plausible metaphor with which to cover its ignorance and to mislead us as well as itself; and so we must be on our guard. Take, for instance, M. Bergson. He tells us that "duration is the continuous progress of the past which *gnaws* into the future, and *swells* as it advances"; that our past in its entirety probably "*follows* us at every instant; all that we have felt, thought, and willed from our infancy is there *leaning* over the present, which is about to join it, *pressing against the portals* of consciousness, which would fain leave it outside," and so on.² This may be picturesque writing,

¹ See Stout's "Manual of Psychology," p. 453.

² "Creative Evolution," p. 5. The italics are ours.

but, we are compelled to ask, how do such metaphors throw any light whatever on the really profound mystery involved in the memory of the past? What possible help to the solution of the enigma, of the apparent contradictions, presented by memory, can we find in thus picturing the past to ourselves as something or somebody following us; or as leaning over the present; or as pressing against a door which is held closed against it; or, worst of all, as some animal devouring its food and becoming distended by the process? If meant as in any sense a help to the understanding of the nature of the function of memory, all this metaphorical writing is, of course, ludicrously futile, and we must beware lest we mistake such clever attempts at vivid metaphorical description for a genuine philosophical explanation of our difficulty. Our business is, surely, far too serious to allow us to cover up fundamental problems in this way with lively figures of speech. Far better, we think, accept the fact, frankly confess its mystery and await further light, than continually disguise our ignorance from ourselves with tropes. The truth is, as we saw in our first chapter, psychology has no appropriate or adequate explanation for such profoundly significant facts as memory at all; since for any real solution we must pass beyond mere psychology and become transcendental; that is to say, we must pass from mere psychological description to metaphysics, which has for its special province to inquire into the first principles of all knowledge and all experience.

But the attempt to explain memory, as to explain any simple act of introspection, will be found entirely futile if the transcendental permanent ego be ignored. It is to the credit, we think, of John Stuart Mill that he so clearly recognized and frankly confessed the mystery memory presents, and faced it honestly and squarely, though, it must in justice be said, not successfully. "Memory," he wrote, "involves a belief in more than its own existence.

A sensation involves only this, but the remembrance of a sensation involves the suggestion and belief, that a sensation of which it is a copy or representation actually existed in the past." And then he further notes this most essential feature in the experience, namely, that memory involves, not only that the remembered sensation did as a fact formerly exist, but that "I and I only had it." He then goes on to say, "I am thus not only a series of feelings or a possibility of them, but I am *aware* of myself as such, and it is a paradox that a series should be *aware* of itself as a series."¹ "We are," he further says, "forced to apprehend every part of a series as linked with the other parts by *something in common* which is not the feelings themselves; and as that which is the same in the first as in the second, and in the second as in the third . . . must be the same in the fiftieth, *this common element is a permanent element.*"² Now these statements show how thoroughly Mill grasped the nature of the problem he had to deal with in memory, though, as we have said, he did not deal with it successfully.

These citations from such a positivist and utilitarian in philosophy as J. S. Mill, suffice to indicate beyond doubt or cavil the imperative need we are under to assume the reality of the transcendental ego if we would render any intelligible account of the fact of memory. For what else but the transcendental ego is it that constitutes or could constitute what Mill terms the permanent element common to all our experiences as distinct individuals, and by virtue of which each of us can say, "I and only I had them"? If we will but surrender the vain attempt to explain the nature and significance of memory by the purely psychological method, and, becoming frankly metaphysical and transcendental, postulate some ego or self whose function it is, we discover that there is no

¹ J. S. Mill on "Hamilton," chap. xii. See also Carveth Read, "Metaphysics of Experience," p. 228.

² The italics are ours.

need to suppose that in memory the past is recalled or reinstated. Nor are we troubled by the problem how any ideal copy or facsimile in our present consciousness can be known to stand for or represent accurately what, being over and gone and done with, must be regarded as existing no more, and therefore entirely out of our reach. The past, in truth, never can be only or absolutely past ; but must be taken, in no merely figurative, but in a very real and literal sense, to exist still. We must not deceive ourselves by picturing ourselves as scattering our experiences about us as we move along our pathway in life, leaving them strewn and lying behind us upon the road over which we have travelled, to be gathered up again, recollected or reinstated afterwards as occasion may require. In truth *we* do not proceed at all. Let us beware, we would again repeat, that we be not misled by plausible metaphors. Whole systems both of theology and philosophy have been built upon tropes. What is past and what is now happening to me are both mine, the one as well as the other. Together they form one whole complex of experience, qualifying the non-temporal or eternal ego whose experience we say it is. Time of itself is not real ; is not, and cannot be, the one substance or material of the universe ; but, if we would avoid falling into endless absurdity and self-contradiction, must be regarded simply as one form of the ego's manifold experience, and not in itself the one reality. While, therefore, it is correct to say that time, as well as space, is *in* the ego as a form of its experience, it would be grossly inaccurate, it would be to entangle ourselves in endless errors, confusions, and paradoxes, to say the ego *is* time, or is itself *in* time, or is even a stream of temporal consciousness. On the contrary, the order and context of my past experience is rightly to be regarded as still retained in me, but non-temporally. But if the I, the self, the transcendental ego, is not a mere flux of temporal experience, but essentially an eternal identity that appears or manifests in

time, then it is not difficult to see that its past is and must be owned by it still. For whatever experience once qualifies this eternal transcendental ego must necessarily be conceived of as also eternal, it still exists, however much it may be modified by subsequent events ; since qualities or experiences are not separate entities that the ego can discard or get rid of, as medieval thinkers held accidents could be separated from their substance. The past, then, is my experience still, qualifies me still, I own it still, though in a non-temporal fashion ; and, therefore, I do not, in a literal sense, need to recall or reinstate or reproduce it, or to have some present idea in my mind to represent it, because I have it still ; it is in truth an integral part of my very being, it is I myself so qualified.

There are, in truth, many facts in our experience that go to support and confirm the correctness of this interpretation of the real nature of the self or ego ; one or two of the most important may suitably be mentioned in this place.

1. What has been termed the reality-feeling, for instance, which colours, so to speak, our remembered past, distinguishes it entirely from what we merely fancy or imagine. This feeling of its reality betokens the fact that our past exists, is somehow and in some sense real still, quite as real as what we experience now, as what is happening now. Though no longer present in the time-flow it still exists. It has not become extinct so as to cease altogether to exist, as though it had never been or were only imagined ; nor has it lapsed into some impossible limbo lying between the regions of reality and unreality, but belonging to neither. There must, then, necessarily be some other form of existence other than that of the time-flow or so-called stream of consciousness. There is a non-temporal or eternal form in which the past is still in the fullest sense real, as living a reality as ever the present can be.

2. In this connection it is not a little interesting and

instructive to note how metaphysically correct our grammatical forms of speech often instinctively are, more so at times than is our more deliberate and reflective philosophy itself. Our personal pronouns, for example, stubbornly refuse to be watered down into signifying a mere feeling-mass or series of psychical events, which abstract psychology so often offers us as the self in lieu of the transcendental ego. Other grammatical forms also show how persistent the mind is in treating the past as still qualifying or owned by the ego or subject, and in refusing to treat it as only and entirely past. An Englishman, even if speaking of what happened twenty years ago, will say, "I *have* been to Berlin." The fact of having once been in that city, he declares, qualifies him still, he owns, he *has* that experience still, "I *have* been there." A German is even still more explicit, for he will say, "Ich *bin* in London gewesen." He affirms he still *is*, "Ich *bin*," what once happened to him; what he formerly experienced that he himself *is* now. Such forms of speech are indisputable testimonies to the fact that the real nature of our mental structure cannot be hidden or suppressed, but reveals and embodies itself inevitably, often in spite of ourselves and our philosophy, in all the more highly evolved languages of civilized humanity. The more the human mind advances in the reflective or self-conscious stage of its experience, the more does this non-temporal character of the ego obtrude itself.

3. Our ethics likewise insist on qualifying us with our past; that is, in treating us as though we were now doing what we did and saying what we said. Morality tells a man he *is* a thief if he stole a week or a year ago, that he *is* a liar by reason of the falsehood he told yesterday. It is, in truth, because the past is still alive within our ego, qualifying it now, that we feel our responsibility for it; and for this reason religion, too, calls importunately for its atonement if the past has been wrong. If the past, as is sometimes affirmed, were altogether over and

gone it would, of course, be beyond recall and for ever unalterable, since in strict truth it would not exist at all, and therefore would neither need nor be capable of atonement. It is just because it still exists and qualifies the transcendental ego that it may be toned, modified, altered, *atoned*, as religion says, by subsequent experiences and events.

It is also important in this connection further to note that in all probability nothing is ever really forgotten. On this point the late Wm. James, M. Bergson, and Mr F. C. S. Schiller are all agreed ; though such a view is quite evidently incompatible with the theory that reality is essentially a perpetual flux or stream of consciousness.¹ Indeed, if we take the transcendental view of the ego it is not so much a mystery that we should ever remember as that we should ever forget. We ought, therefore, to say that it is rather the mystery of forgetfulness than the mystery of memory that really calls for solution.

We conclude, then, that the ego is transcendental. It is not in time ; still less is it time itself or a mere stream of temporal consciousness. Our past experience is not over and done with, it is ours still ; and it is ours still because the ego is eternal. Indeed, it is very little better than tautology to say that what qualifies it once qualifies it for ever. Once more, then, we conclude there is no need that memory should reinstate, recover, or recollect the past, since it is there already, a living active reality albeit existing in a non-temporal or eternal form.

But, having now reached this stage in our inquiry into the real nature of what we mean by the identical ego or self, we must pause once more on our way. We would endeavour to clear our road of all obstructions so far as possible as we advance, and it behoves us, therefore, to examine somewhat more fully and carefully than we have yet done, though as briefly as may be, the view of reality

¹ See F. C. S. Schiller, "Riddles of the Sphinx," p. 296 ; H. Bergson, "Creative Evolution," p. 5 ; Wm. James, "Pluralistic Universe," p. 299.

presented by that philosophy which more especially, and with great vigour, challenges our main conclusions. Its competing claims as an account of reality it is incumbent on us to dispose of, if we can, once and for all, before going further. We shall then feel at liberty to disregard them for the most part during the rest of our journey. We refer of course to the so-called *Philosophy of Change*, as expounded at the present time chiefly in the writings of James and Bergson, and which has achieved widespread and extraordinary popularity even among thinking and cultivated minds. It is in truth a very old view of reality, though presented in a modern brilliant and very attractive dress.

Heracleitus, the great apostle of the all-inclusive reality of Change, as Prof. Ladd appropriately calls him, in a fragment of his writings that has escaped the ravages of time, says, "There is nothing abiding, either in the world or in its constitution taken as a whole. Not only individual things, but also the Universe as a whole, are involved in perpetual ceaseless revolution; *all flows*, and nothing abides. We cannot say of things that they are; they become only, and pass away in the ever-changing play of the movement of the Universe. That, then, which abides, and deserves the name of deity, is not a thing, and not a substance, or matter, but motion, the cosmic process, *Becoming itself*." And it is precisely this abstract Heracleitean view of reality that M. Bergson and his disciples embrace in all its literalness, and try to carry out to its logical extreme. Even Heracleitus, it would seem, recognized in a somewhat vague sort of way, that within the everlasting flow there was present a hidden formative harmony, a divine directing law (*δικη*), a wisdom operative as an efficient force (*γνωμη*), an imperial and universal reason (*λογος*).¹ But our modern representatives of this Philosophy of Change will not allow the presence within the flowing real of any such transcendental

¹ See Ladd's "Theory of Reality," p. 140.

principle. Reason for them, as we saw, was, not a divine, but merely a human and purely utilitarian factor, and therefore not a governing, controlling, directing principle, acting within the everlasting flow. They regard reality, therefore, as in no sense an eternal fact revealing itself in time ; but invite us to see in the flow of time itself, *i.e.* in everlasting movement, the very substance, or " stuff " as they call it, of reality. This philosophy stands in extreme contrast with the philosophy of the changeless ; the philosophy, namely, which affirms that only the eternal, only the static is real ; that the changing flux of things is pure illusion, due to our finitude, a fall from perfection, " Maya," mere appearance, existing only to be overcome, surmounted, got rid of, and annulled. But the truth is not to be found at either of these two violent philosophical extremes. It stands between them and does justice to both. It says to them, " You are each right in what you affirm, and you are each wrong in what you deny. Without the term you reject, the one you retain has no meaning, since each essentially implies and is relative to the other." The truth will thus lie in the statement that the Eternal appears in time, the Changeless in the changing. Without the eternal Reality there could be no temporal flux or appearance ; but, on the other hand, without the temporal flux, without appearance, there could be no eternal Reality. The Absolute, it will be remembered we said in our introductory chapters on religion and the evolutionary process, is ever self-revealed and self-revealing. It is of its very essence to appear in time. Reject, therefore, from your philosophy either term and you fall into endless entanglement ; in your attempt to interpret Reality you will assuredly end in utter confusion and hopeless defeat. This judgment is, we hold, amply illustrated by the modern philosophical attempt to treat time as the sole reality ; and by the ineptitude of this philosophy in dealing with the subject we are more especially considering, namely, what it is we

mean when we say we remember the past. These statements we will now endeavour as briefly as possible to substantiate.

On the Heracleitean principle that only the flux is real, memory of the past would be impossible; would indeed, be meaningless, would be a contradiction in terms. Even if on such a theory it were conceivable, which we do not admit, that the effects of the past could live in the present as disposition, impulse, tendency, habit, just as when, for example, we learn a tune or a poem, and then afterwards can repeat it by heart; yet the detailed memory of place and time, attendant circumstances, order of sequence, etc., of our past experience would, we submit, be quite inexplicable, if reality presented no other aspect than that of temporal movement; *i.e.* if there were no unchanging eternal element as well. Consistently with such a theory only the present can be truly said to be real, what is happening just here and now, "the present passing pulse of feeling," as it has been aptly called. The past would, that is to say, live only in its effects. But, we contend, that this is not the case; that the past does not live in its effects only, but is indeed every whit as real in all its details as is the present, and as truly qualifies the ego as what is happening now. Both, as we have said, form one context of experience. The past, regarded in this purely abstract temporal aspect, no doubt is over; but as *my* past qualifies me still. When for instance I say, I dined with my friend yesterday, I mean I *am* to-day the man who had that experience yesterday; and I assert that event to qualify me *now*, which it could not do if it in no sense existed still. M. Bergson says the past "*endures.*" Yes, but in what sense and how? In what sense does my dining with my friend yesterday still endure? He tells us that "our duration is not merely one instant replacing another; if it were, there never would be anything but the present, no prolonging of the past into the actual." Quite so.

That is exactly our contention. But how, we ask, does my dining with my friend yesterday prolong itself into the actual? You surely do not mean to say I am dining with him still? No, it will be answered, nothing is meant so absurd as that; but that "the past is felt as a whole in the form of impulse or tendency."¹ Yes, we are quite prepared to agree that this is so, but that is not what is meant when I say, I dined with my friend yesterday. I do not mean I have an impulse or tendency to dine with him to-day, for it may quite likely happen I have no wish to do anything of the sort. Our contention is that the past lives in the present, not simply as impulse or disposition, but as qualifying the non-temporal ego whose experience it was, it lives in all the fulness of its details still though not in the flux of time. Ignore or deny the identical non-temporal ego, and, we assert, you can attach no intelligible meaning even to so simple a statement as, "I dined yesterday with my friend." Again, take our judicial procedure. We do not hang or imprison a man for his present impulse or tendency to murder or theft. We visit on him the punishment of his past deeds because we regard them as still his; we regard them, and rightly so, just as though they were being perpetrated by him at the present moment; temporal distinction is ignored. We qualify him now with what he did in the past even though it were years ago. We make him the owner of the past in all its details as he stands there now before us in the dock. The question, then, that requires appropriate philosophical exposition is, why, on what grounds other than mere conventional utilitarian or forensic fiction, do we justly and truly credit ourselves and others with the words and deeds of the past; which, so far as the so-called flux of consciousness is concerned, being over and gone, must be regarded as existing no more. We treat these words and deeds exactly as though they were being spoken and done at

¹ "Creative Evolution," p. 6.

the present moment ; or rather, to speak more correctly, *time is ignored*. How, then, does this come about ? Are we all the while living under an illusion which further psychological or scientific inquiry will serve to dispel, as it has dispelled the illusion of the unsophisticated mind that greenness is in the grass, or that stones and iron are really intrinsically and in their own nature continuous solids ? If reality is nothing but a perpetual flux, if its essence is nothing but movement and change, if there be no enduring non-temporal ego to whom we can credit the past, then we confess we can find no intelligible solution of this problem.

Now when we turn to the Philosophy of Change for an explanation of the real significance of this treatment of ourselves and others as still owners of the past in all its details, what do we find ? Instead of genuine philosophical insight and exposition we are treated for the most part to a great affluence of psychological description, generally of a very highly figurative kind, ingenious indeed, but often, in our judgment, inappropriate and quite misleading. Besides the metaphors to which we have already alluded, M. Bergson in his exposition of the faculty of memory treats us to others equally striking and vivid. The cerebral mechanism, we are told, is so arranged as to *drive back* into the unconscious almost all the past, admitting beyond the threshold only that which is useful and needed for the present situation. But those recollections that are superfluous for any special occasion and yet obtrude themselves upon us, he says, succeed in *smuggling themselves through the half-open door*. These superfluous memories, he adds, remind us of what we are *dragging behind us unawares*. Elsewhere illustrations of other vital and psychic processes and phenomena are derived from bomb-shells, sky-rockets, cinematographs, scissors, and knives. We have to confess we find little psychological or philosophical edification but a great deal of confusion in all this wealth of incongruous and irrele-

vant metaphor. This sort of "picture thinking" is no doubt pleasing to the popular mind ; but we are sure all the more dangerous, since it is apt to delude us into believing we have grasped some first principle of reality, when all we have actually succeeded in doing is to give some interesting metaphorical descriptions of vital or psychological processes and activities. We are convinced this will be found to be a correct account of much that appears in the pages of these philosophers of the everlasting flux.¹

¹ See "Creative Evolution" (Eng. Trans.), pp. 5, 12, 103, 212, 260, 264, 322. The following further illustrations of the unpardonable use of figurative language even to the point of absurdity in philosophical exposition the reader will, we think, find both interesting and instructive. M. Bergson tells us that what we regard as solid bodies occupying space are not there by their own right, but are really *carved* out of the everlasting flux by ourselves in the very act by which we perceive them. Naturally he finds difficulty in explaining thus the organized bodies of living beings. It would certainly be a very awkward position to be driven by his philosophical principles to maintain that it was merely his own perception that *cut* out of the flowing real the organized bodies, say, of his own parents, who must accordingly be supposed not to exist before he perceived them. And so he invents, quite arbitrarily and purely to meet this special difficulty, two quite different sorts of perception, one that cuts and one that doesn't. An organized body, according to M. Bergson, is there ready-made for our perception, cut out, as he says, naturally by its very organism ; but that on the other hand in the case of inert bodies it is our perception itself that cuts them out of the flowing real (see "Creative Evolution," p. 240). Miss Underhill, again, an ardent disciple of M. Bergson, in her book on "Mysticism," thus picturesquely accounts for these same bodies. The intellect, we are told, picks *bits* out of the flow of reality, bits that are significant for human life, bits that catch its attention, and out of these bits it builds up a mechanical world to dwell in and thinks it quite real till criticism destroys the illusion (see "Mysticism," p. 36). We are not told how these wonderful bits significant for human life came to be there swimming about in the flowing real, nor how we who pick them out came to be at all ; but with greater discretion than M. Bergson, Miss Underhill does not venture to raise the question as to organized bodies. Could there, we ask, be a more complete *reductio ad absurdum* of this whole theory of reality when we see what shifts writers so able as the above are driven to when they attempt on their Heracleitean principles to explain how we come, illusively, to think we perceive solid stationary bodies occupying space though in reality everything is in a state of perpetual flux ?

It should, moreover, be noted that, do what it will, this Philosophy of Change cannot, after all, conjure the identical ego away. Always there lurks within it, concealed often by a copious use of metaphors, the presupposition of the unchanging, identical factor which has been at the outset with much ostentation discarded. It is manifest that nothing, whether in memory or anywhere else, can endure, if movement, if change, if the flux be all. "All that endures is change," so we are told. But this is either a manifest play upon words or a palpable contradiction, unless, as we say, we suppose the suppressed ego there, for whom all this flow and change exists, constituting the indispensable correlative without which change itself would be meaningless and unthinkable. Again and again the ego, in quite unwarrantable manner, breaks in upon us in the midst of the exposition; and inevitably so, since without its presence, recognized or suppressed, all this description of movement, flowing, and change is nonsense. For instance, Mr Wildon Carr, in a remarkable little book of his on H. Bergson, of which we are told in the preface M. Bergson himself read the proof sheets and suggested the sub-title, "Philosophy of Change," tells us that "the intellect is a special adaptation of the mind, which enables the being endowed with it to view reality outside it." But we are naturally moved to ask, who then is this "being endowed with intellect" here introduced to us by Mr Carr quite unexpectedly in the midst of his exposition of this philosophy of change, without even a decent metaphorical disguise. We are naturally eager to know who this being is, whence he came, by what right he is here, and if originally within the flowing reality and identical with it, how he succeeded in getting outside so as to view it as it rolls along. It is, of course, none other than the transcendental, identical ego, the unchanging factor, essential to all experience, which is unwarrantably thrust upon the scene after having been explicitly renounced. It will be remembered

how Wm. James, too, when reducing everything, as he thought, to what he termed "the distributed, strung-along, flowing sort of reality," yet left us ourselves as "finite beings" still swimming in it. M. Bergson likewise gives us frequent illustration of this point. Take, for instance, his little volume on "Metaphysics."¹ He tells us that the difficulties inherent in metaphysics "arise from the fact that we place ourselves in the immobile order to lie in wait for the moving thing as it passes, instead of replacing ourselves in the moving thing itself, in order to traverse with it the immobile positions." Here then, once more, we have the static, unchanging order, and ourselves also as we float along in the moving real traversing its immobile positions. In all three writers—Wm. James, Mr Carr, and M. Bergson—we are thus constantly confronted with this same being endowed with intellect—that is to say, the transcendental ego expressly present or else supposed, as well as the flowing real itself. And this is no mere accident of speech, no mere pardonable looseness of language; it is a fundamental necessity of all thought, which, however ignored, cannot be expunged. It is the other end of Prof. Ferrier's stick which these philosophers insist has but one.

The sum of our criticism then is this: Treat time, change, movement in Heracleitean fashion as fundamental, as the only real, as the very substance or "stuff" of which things are made, and then attempt to expound experience and especially memory, and of necessity you end in confusion and have to take refuge in irrelevant and misleading metaphors; or else, to avoid absurdity, you have to call in the other factor, the enduring, identical ego to your aid. To give any meaning to your exposition you must surreptitiously or openly introduce it after it has been explicitly disavowed.

We have referred to this Philosophy of Change here for two reasons. First, to draw attention to the danger,

¹ "Introduction to Metaphysics," p. 57.

to which we have already frequently alluded, of a too facile use of figurative language in metaphysical exposition. We quite recognize and freely admit that you cannot banish all metaphor from philosophy. The poverty and imperfect nature of all speech, as well as the subtilty of the subject, make this impossible. But as we read such a writer as M. Bergson we have it constantly forced home upon us, that the very facility, brilliance, and versatility in the use of such illustrations for which this author is justly celebrated, and which accounts to no inconsiderable extent for the present popularity his philosophy enjoys, has proved a snare both to himself and his disciples. As well-nigh invariably happens in such cases, when the psychological or scientific method is alone adopted in treating of the mind, the temptation arises to take mere metaphorical description for genuine philosophical insight. We have delayed our inquiry into the nature of the self in order to refer to this philosophy of change, in the second place, because its expounders show almost at every turn that, do what they will to get rid of it, the spirit of the abiding reality inevitably haunts them still. The ghost of the slain ego refuses to be laid ; ever and anon the spectre reappears on the stage, and constrains us to exclaim with Horatio :

But, soft ! behold ! lo, where it comes again !
 Stay, illusion !
 If thou hast any sound, or use of voice,
 Speak to me !

But we believe it is no mere illusion ; on the contrary, we believe it has a voice, one that speaks eternal and memorable things, to which it would be well both for our philosophy and religion reverently to listen.

Let us, then, return to our inquiry into the nature of memory, regarding it in the light of that profounder philosophy, which sees in the self a transcendental principle, an identity that, in its ultimate metaphysical

truth, must be interpreted as a finite form or appearance of the Absolute Ego.

In the first place, then, the view of the ego, of the finite ego, of that identity, namely, which we each intuitively discern to accompany, as an essential element or factor, all our fleeting experiences, the view of the ego or self, at which in our present inquiry we have so far arrived, requires that we regard all its experiences as, so to speak, flowing or issuing forth from it, that is to say, as its appearances; not as added on to it from the outside, nor as a new creation on its part. What you have ever done, or seen, or felt, or in any way experienced, that is yourself coming out of your eternity into the succession of time. There is a word of Walt Whitman's to which we would here call attention, a word that he uses in this very connection, and one which, in the use he makes of it, proves his insight into the nature of Ultimate Reality to have been that of a great poet; a word, too, which is so expressive, and at the same time so exact as applied to the creative process, that we shall frequently avail ourselves of it in the course of our further exposition, we mean the word *exfoliation*. "Creation's incessant unrest, exfoliation," he writes. This word, employed by Walt Whitman to describe the creative process, indicates clearly that his view of the universe agreed with the absolutist's, namely, that it is the appearance or progressive revelation of the life and nature of the Ultimate Reality. And, further, by necessary implication it rejects all collectivist or pluralist notions concerning the structure of the human mind. It tells you that you are not a collection of ideas, thoughts, sensations, or of experiences of any other kind. You are not built up of already existent psychic elements which in some mysterious manner got together so as to form one consciousness. Nor are you a series of such factors; nor merely a stream of consciousness. All such purely psychological conceptions of the human soul or ego the expression *exfolia-*

tion, applied to its history, by implication emphatically rejects. And so, too, for the same reason nothing new can ever be added on to you from outside you ; nor is any experience of yours absolutely new, something that in no sense existed before you had it. It was implicit in you from the first, in the sense that it was amongst the possibilities of your nature ; and what in you was thus implicit becomes in the course of your life-history explicit in all the details of your varied experiences. And through those experiences of yours, but necessarily under finite conditions and limitations, the Absolute Spirit itself, immanent in you, also finds some degree of expression. Thus the details of your life-history are not strictly new creations, unless, as we have said, you mean by creation simply the making manifest of what was before implicit—in a word, exfoliation.

In the second place, both space and time must be treated as no more than forms for the detailed expression of the implicit ; in space the details are co-existent ; in time successive ; neither of them is reality itself, but only a form of reality's appearance or expression by self-limitation. Let us first take objects in space, or reality's appearance as external co-existence. There is not an object which seems presented to you, which is not from another point of view the exfoliation of your nature. When you look at the blue sky, for instance, the reality beyond you seems to be presented to you, seems to come to you, to come, that is, from without. Yet from another point of view the sensation of blue is only an appearance of yourself ; it is evolved from within you and remains within you, and is indeed yourself, yourself appearing in this particular manner. It is not projected into you from some source outside you. Your sensation or perception of blue is the exfoliation of some element in your complex nature, though called forth by external reality. That appeal, no doubt, comes to you as from without, under the form, that is to say, of what Mr Mark Baldwin

appropriately calls "extra-psychoic control,"¹ but the sensation itself arises from within. And yet though the sensation arises from within you it is not self-induced or self-originated; but its emergence as well as its character is determined by reality coming to you as though from outside you and meeting with response from within you, *i.e.* from your nature. These so-called external conditions, then, regulate the sensation's appearance, but the sensation itself comes from within, and remains within the ego, as its expression of itself, in response to this particular external appeal. Your sensations of whatever kind in this way reveal you so far as they go; they reveal your nature, *i.e.* they reveal a certain capacity in you for these special responses under these special conditions. How that nature has been derived and whence, it is not needful for our present purpose just here further to inquire. It has its ultimate roots, of course, in the Absolute. But now let us go a step further, and consider our experience of succession in time.

When you listen with real appreciation to a classical piece of music what is it that happens to you? Now before we can answer this question we must first ask and answer another, namely, what happened in the mind of the original composer when he composed the sonata, or symphony, or whatever it may be. In the first place there was a certain immediate feeling of beauty, or sense of some "deep power of joy." Whatever it was, such was its nature that it demanded expression, or, to use the word we borrowed from Walt Whitman, *exfoliation*. But how was this to be brought about? Original Creation, *i.e.* creative activity of the highest order, would require of the immediate experience, not only that it should demand expression, but that it should include within it both creative and formative power; power, that is to say, which, out of its own substance, should construct and posit the in-

¹ "Thought and Things," vol. i., p. 59.

strument or instruments by which that expression is to be effected. This, however, is not within the capacity of a finite being in whom object, that is external object or matter, and subject, are not ultimately one, as they are within the being and life of the Absolute. There is much, necessarily, in the life of the Absolute that cannot become explicit within the consciousness of any finite centre, however highly gifted. There is certainly the whole material world, or what Schelling and Emerson would call the negative pole of the Absolute Magnet, that limits and controls in external fashion the creative genius of the finite ego. What, then, has the great composer to do? He makes use of a certain form of matter, to wit, the atmosphere, which, when set vibrating, has the power to awaken in him the sense of sound. This he finds appropriate to his purpose; and, by the aid of musical instruments, he evokes within his soul a series of notes, chords, musical phrases, etc. He uses, so to speak, the negative aspect or pole of the Absolute, that aspect or pole that is not, perhaps never could become, explicit within him, or pass through any finite centre of experience, that aspect which we call the material world, to awaken within him this series of sense experiences. In other words, he composes a piece of music with the view to its performance upon some instrument or orchestra of musical instruments. But what determines the particular series and combinations of sounds selected, which we call the sonata or symphony? The answer is the deep feeling of beauty or of joy which agitates the musician's soul. That deep feeling, in other words, exfoliates into this series of sound-sensations. It is true, as we remarked above, that the emotion does not evolve out of itself all these sounds without extraneous aid. Creative power does not attain in his mind to such perfection as this. Nevertheless, this series of sounds is not something that is given or that comes to him from without. They are evoked

instrumentally from within. Once more, they must not, though arising within the ego, be regarded as external to, and as, so to speak, running parallel with, the emotion they express ; as our sensations of sight, for example, are, though within the ego, yet in a sense external to our sensations of sound, and *vice versa*. Rather, as we have said, does the emotion itself exfoliate into the sound series, with the evoking aid of the orchestral instruments. It should be noted that the sounds are in themselves immediate sense experiences, they are forms of the self's immediacy, as is also the emotion they express or reveal. The one deep feeling of the composer, then, lives in every note, chord, and phrase into which it exfoliates, as they in their turn live in the musician's deep feeling. There is unity and there is diversity, and the unity is in the diversity, and the diversity is in the unity. The series of sounds *are* the emotion expressed, revealed, exfoliated. Had they come to the self from the outside, were they simply external additions, and did they merely co-exist and run parallel in the mind with the deep feeling, they would not express or reveal it. The relation must be far more intimate and essential. Thus, then, we conclude that the series of sounds are simply the one deep emotion becoming explicit in a manifold, and yet remaining one with itself and unbroken from beginning to end. The whole process is in the mind ; the emotion and its exfoliation are alike within the ego ; and time is the form of its exfoliation. The need of instruments is due, as we have said, to the finitude of the ego, controlled and regulated as it is externally, or by that aspect of reality that comes to it as from without, the aspect, namely, which we call the material world.

Now when you listen the reverse of the above process takes place in your mind, which is not creative like that of the composer, but, as we say, only receptive. By that is meant that you have, at least when you first

hear the piece, to ascend to the unity of the whole by first listening to the succession of sounds in time. You pass, that is, from the many to the one, as the musical genius passed from the one to the many. You have the talent to appreciate, but he had the genius as we say to create. And we need hardly remark there is a world of difference between the two. Nevertheless, your talent is akin to his genius, and must be so, or you could not appreciate it.

It is, indeed, quite possible that you may listen to the series of sounds and yet fail to grasp them in their unity. You may even go so far as to deny they have any aspect of unity at all, and declare all this enthusiasm for high classical music to be imaginative nonsense. In that case you are a sort of pluralist or positivist in the sphere of music. The unity of the one emotion of which the series or flow of musical sounds is the exfoliation lies as yet below the "*threshold*" of your consciousness. Similarly, you may look on the manifold forms of the external universe and lack the poet's vision to penetrate to the unity of the one Universal Spirit or Oversoul of which they are the revelation. In that case you will fail to appreciate the loftiest strains of a metaphysical poet like Wordsworth, or some of the best painting of the Far East. You will certainly see the trees but not the wood, to use a well-known German aphorism. The power of the poet and that of the musician are thus essentially akin. In both cases the manifold is grasped in the unity of one deep immediate feeling.

And now let us apply this principle of exfoliation to our memory of the past. All our experiences of whatever kind they may be flow from us, they are the implicit in us becoming explicit under the form of time. They are our exfoliation, however they may have been evoked. The action of our material environment, the organic changes in our bodies, or the influence on us of

other selves, all that these conditions can do is to call forth what is already implicit within. We show our appreciation of this truth when, for instance, we call the training of a child its education and not its creation. More and more this principle of exfoliation is being recognized by our highest authorities in education. The environment, they realize, cannot create life or character, it can only evoke the living experiences, and guide them as they flow from the nature of the finite ego. And so all that happens to us, all that we hear and see, all that we think and feel, all that we call our history and experience is the exfoliation, under the form of time, of what is already implicit within us. Hence, let us repeat, we must regard time, not as real, not as "the stuff" of which we are made, but only as the form of our exfoliation. Time is within us, we are not in time. Our ego is non-temporal. And so *we* do not move or flow. We do not travel through life leaving our past behind us, as we leave the stations, the telegraph-posts, the villages, and other objects behind us when we journey through the country by rail. All we experience is ever within us. If we think otherwise we are once more greatly deluded by a metaphor. To call life a journey is a useful and often beautiful figure of speech when employed for religious edification; but is totally misleading if transferred to the sphere of metaphysics. What, then, I remember is in me still. It happened in time; but what happened to me in time and time itself are both alike in me. I, therefore, own my past still, it qualifies me still. It is mine, because it is my very self exfoliated. It was in me implicitly before it happened, it is in me in its details now that it has happened. And I have neither left it behind me, nor am I carrying it along with me as I travel on. For *I* indeed do not move. I exfoliate or evolve.

So far as we have at present gone in our inquiry into the nature of what we mean by "self," we have, then,

reached three main conclusions. In the first place, we have found that every experience is also experienc-*ed*; and by that is meant that it is owned by, or in other words, qualifies some subject. Then, secondly, we found that this subject is the unchanging aspect of consciousness, the aspect, that is to say, which remains one and the same amid our varying states and activities. This aspect is what we mean when we speak of the self and is the universal principle or principle of identity essential to all knowledge and all experience actual or conceivable. Without the acknowledgment of this unchanging or non-temporal aspect in experience, to talk of change would, we saw, be either senseless absurdity or stark contradiction. To declare movement and change to be real in abstraction from identity, that is divorced from any subject that moves and changes, is to use words without meaning; it is to say that there is bare change, change itself without any reference expressed or implied to that which does not change; and this is no better, is no less ridiculous, than to say you can have a coin with one side only, or that you can have a stick with only one end by the simple expedient of cutting off the other. All movement, all change, no matter of what sort, we noted is of necessity relative, relative to that which does not change, to some identity that is the subject of it. And we found, moreover, that all our conceptions of such a subject were derived from our own direct and intuitive experience of personal identity. This was our second main conclusion. Our third was that the self or subject was not an abstract unity, that merely stood in contrast with its manifold appearances, but a concrete unity, the one *in* the many, a Self with a nature. This nature, we said, exfoliated into all the rich and varied details of its experience, thus revealing itself in what we call its evolution or history. Such, then, in brief are the main results of our inquiry so far into the deeper meanings of what we term the Self.

There are, it should be added, in all our noblest literature, in all the greatest music, in all that we call fine art numerous other facts of experience that afford further confirmation of these conclusions, but which we will not delay to adduce at present, trusting that enough has been here offered to establish the reality of the Self with its nature ; in other words, of that transcendental or identical ego, without which, let us again repeat, no knowledge, no experience, no evolution is either possible or conceivable.

Our next chapter will be devoted to the consideration of the negative aspect of the self in relation to the subject of our present inquiry, namely, the essential nature and significance of religion as an immediate experience of Perfection.

CHAPTER XI

CAN WE EXPERIENCE THE PERFECT?—(Continued)

(3) THE NEGATIVE ASPECT OF THE FINITE SELF

WE have now arrived at a stage in our investigation into the nature of the self where it is altogether important we should consider its negative aspect, and indicate the bearing this has on its permanence and perfection. We shall discover that this exclusive feature is quite as indispensable to its reality and continuance as is its positive or affirmative side. Each without the other would, of course, be meaningless. For every affirmation asserts itself over against something that negates it. And this negative is also an affirmative, asserting itself against the former; which now in its turn becomes a negative. So that every affirmative is also explicitly or implicitly a negation and every negation an affirmation. An undetermined Yea and an undetermined Nay are, of course, alike unthinkable and meaningless. To be able to say what a thing is *not* is just as essential to our knowledge of it as to be able to say what it *is*. Here, then, as in the case of Time and Eternity, the Changing and the Changeless, we are in the presence of correlative opposites, each implying the other, each without significance except in reference to the other.

It will be recalled that we found in all existence, in every form of consciousness from the most elementary up to the Absolute itself, that there was an essential basic duality, a distinction of object and subject, something known and the knower of it. This duality in

unity we discovered to be fundamental to all experience and to all knowledge. There is, we said, objectivity and subjectivity, that is some ultimate affirmation and negation within the Eternal or Absolute Self whose essential nature it is to be the unity of both. In the Absolute, necessarily, there are no external relations or negations, yet some primal basic duality there must be, some internal distinction within its unity, or it would be equivalent to nothing at all. A bare affirmative One without internal diversity would be, we said, a mere abstraction without content and therefore meaningless. Some fundamental duality there must be, some ultimate internal distinction, some primary affirmation and negation within the unitary being of the Absolute Self, otherwise there would be nothing to include, nothing for it to experience. Pure undifferentiated being is, therefore, quite inconceivable; an abstract One without a manifold, with no internal differences, would be indistinguishable from nonentity. Some internal fundamental distinction is thus necessary not only to the perfection but to the very being of the Absolute. Such we take to be the nature of Reality, not only as required by consistent thought, but equally as given in concrete experience.

This ultimate duality in unity, it will be remembered, has been frequently regarded by mystics, poets, and thinkers as analogous to a magnet with its two opposite poles, positive and negative, the two poles corresponding respectively to what we know as mind and matter. And this fundamental polarity within the being of the Absolute has been taken to be a condition essential to its further differentiation into all the exhaustless number of finite selves with their wellnigh infinitely diversified experiences on the one hand, and into the innumerable contrasted forms and objects of the material world on the other. This is indeed a plausible, interesting, and most suggestive view regarding the fundamental con-

stitution of universe. We cannot, however, delay now to ponder over and examine this theory with all the care it deserves, since we are at present engaged more especially with the negative aspect of the finite, not of the Absolute Self; yet it is important and most relevant to note that some fundamental interior negation would seem to be essential even to the Absolute itself, corresponding to what we know as matter on the one hand and mind on the other; and, therefore, so far from negation being an evidence of evil or defect, it proves, on more profound inquiry, to be not only compatible with the Absolute's perfection, but essential to its very reality. If this be the case, the plea, then, that finitude or negation is necessarily an evil or defect has already been answered.

And yet by a certain class of thinkers all negation has been regarded as a sure mark of defect and unreality. Of such thinkers Spinoza is an eminent example. He took it for granted and as quite self-evident that all determination was simply negation and nothing more. "Since determination," he said, "indicates nothing positive, but only a privation of existence in the nature conceived as determinate, it follows that that of which the definition affirms existence cannot be conceived as determinate."¹ And so he draws the conclusion that God, or the absolutely perfect Being, must be "a Being absolutely indeterminate." In the *Ethics*, again, he lays it down that "finite being is negation, infinite being absolute affirmation."² But, surely, it is axiomatic and quite self-evident, as we have said, that a bare negation which is the limitation of nothing positive, and which does not itself rest on some implied or asserted affirmation, is not even a negation. And on the other hand an absolute affirmation that does not reveal itself, that is to say its nature, in determinations, would affirm nothing, would in fact be nothing. An

¹ Epistle 41.

² See J. Caird's "Spinoza," pp. 121, 122.

unmanifested or unrevealed unity would be a pure abstraction ; and so, as we remarked in a previous chapter, God or the Absolute Being must be conceived of as ever self-revealed and ever self-revealing ; and this eternal self-determining activity is of the essence of his perfection.

This fallacy that in the perfect One the finite many must be somehow "annulled" rules in all those abstract philosophies and mysticisms that regard the destiny of all things finite to be that of ultimate absorption into the Infinite, and that, consequently, treat all finitude or negation as essentially evil, so that all God's revelation of Himself, all His self-manifestation, must be considered as of the nature of a fall. For it is perfectly clear you can have no revelation, you can have no disclosure of the nature of Absolute Being, except in and by means of a plurality, the component members of which necessarily limit or negate one another. You might, therefore, just as well call it a fall when a Beethoven or a Mozart or a Handel reveals or expresses his genius in symphony or sonata ; or when an artist gives forth his soul in some masterpiece of painting ; or when a poet embodies his creative genius in the many heroes and incidents of his great epic. It is surely just as perverse to speak of the Absolute's revelation of the unity and perfection of his being in the manifold works of nature and in the varied powers and activities of finite selves as a fall. The Absolute, we have said, must be thought of as a Self, and it is the nature of a Self to be concrete, to be creative, to express the quality of its being in manifold functions and activities. Negation, then, or determination, is not necessarily evil. The essence of evil is not that it is negative. But determination or finitude becomes evil in the finite ego only when it is allowed to negate, to hinder, or to suppress a deeper, a more inclusive and harmonious affirmation. It is not needful, therefore, to the perfection of the Absolute that we as finite selves should cease to exist, or be reabsorbed

into the divine essence. Evil, let us repeat, is only relative ; and finitude, limitation, or negation, is only evil when it checks or prevents the expression of what is more perfect than itself. There is, therefore, nothing essentially evil in being finite. It would, indeed, be a strange doctrine either as religion or as philosophy which should declare us to be guilty sinners, because, forsooth, we are not the Absolute. We conclude, then, that there is no need to allow this purely *à priori* and abstract logical objection to the permanence of the finite self to deter us from a further inquiry into its nature as given in concrete experience.

The ego, the finite ego, whose nature we are investigating, has then another aspect besides that of affirmative existence. As subject it is positive ; but it could not be this were it nothing else. The negative feature or features are equally prominent and emphatic. It is marked by internal changes and distinctions, and it is also negated externally, by what we call the material world, and again by the presence and activity of other selves or finite centres. The finite ego or self is, thus, not only a subject, not only self-identical, but it is equally of its essence that it should be limited or negated both internally and externally. So much, we take it, is given in experience. If, indeed, we found that the presence of these negative features in the finite ego resulted in what is known in philosophy as solipsism ; that is to say, if we found that the negative element shut the finite ego up completely to itself, and had to be deleted in order to be transcended, then, of course, Spinoza and his disciples would be justified. But, on the contrary, such is the happy paradox of our concrete life, that we do in fact transcend our finitude every moment without losing it. Here, again, comes in, as we shall further see, the appropriate application of our fundamental principle—*solvitur ambulando*—and saves us from our purely theoretic difficulties. The objections and dilemmas of our formal logic must not, it declares, be permitted to determine the possibilities of actual concrete experience.

Setting aside, then, the merely logical contradictions and objections that might be supposed to lie in the way of the permanence of the finite ego, and the possibility of its experiencing the Perfect, let us proceed to examine its negative aspect by the concrete method. Now it has been frequently pointed out that no knowledge of one person by another, however intimate, can efface the distinction between the mind as it is for itself, and the mind as it is for another. The essence of a person does not consist in what he is for another, but in what he is for himself. It is in the latter direction that we must look if we would discover the true principle of his individuality; we must ask ourselves what he is for himself, what he is when looked at *from within*. The error of those who, in their treatment of the self, deny this principle of individuality comes as we have seen from speaking as though the essence of a person lay in what is known about him, *i.e.* in the merely psychological knowledge of him, and not in his own knowledge, his own experience, of himself. "However much," says Dr Hastings Rashdall, "I know of another man, and however much by the likeness of my own experience, by the interpretation which I put upon his acts and words, by the sympathy which I feel for him, I may know of another man's inner life, that life is for ever a thing quite distinct from me, the knower of it. My toothache is for ever my toothache, and can never become yours; and so is my love for another person, however passionately I may desire—to use that metaphor of poets and rhetoricians, which imposes upon mystics and even upon philosophers—to become one with the object of my love, for that love would cease to be if the aspiration were to be literally fulfilled. And if *per impossible* two disembodied spirits or selves were to go through exactly the same experience, knew, felt, willed always alike, still they would be two and not one."¹ This, it

¹ We quote from Mr Boyce Gibson's excellent critique on "Euken," pp. 90, 91.

must be conceded, is, so far as it goes, a very exact and lucid description of the negative element in the self. But for the purpose of the present inquiry it is necessary to carry the exposition still further, and to trace out all its implications.

And in the first place, keeping in view this essential negative aspect of the finite ego, we must be on our guard against being deceived or misled by loose popular phrases such as "*thought transference*," or "*entering into another's feelings*," or "*losing ourselves in love for another*," and so on. Such expressions are allowable in ordinary parlance, but are not to be taken literally. Whatever truth there may be in what is termed "*thought transference*," for example, the expression must not be taken to mean that any thought, feeling, or experience of any sort, actually leaves or can leave one mind to pass in a literal sense into the mind of another. Of course, when a thought is said to be transferred, it is not meant that it goes out of the mind that first had it. It remains where it first was, though the second mind has somehow a corresponding thought awakened in it. A thought cannot be passed from mind to mind like a coin from pocket to pocket, or a hat from head to head. Such a "*reification*" of mental states and activities would be quite unpsychological and absurd. We must, then, be on our guard against the too literal interpretation of such loose phrases invented to describe it. And so with other similar expressions. This negative element in the self, then, is a fact not to be disputed, and is essential if the self's integrity and permanence are to be preserved.

But once more, there is also implied the *uniqueness* of each self. It is no doubt conceivable that two spirits might go through exactly the same experiences looked at from without ; regarded, that is to say, from the standpoint of a spectator, such as the observing descriptive generalizing psychologist is supposed to be ; yet, considered from within, from the psychic point of view, as

it has been termed, each self is a case of what German thinkers have called "fürsichsein," being-for-self, and this signifies that each self is a unique as well as exclusive centre of interest. This uniqueness or particularity is necessarily incommunicable and ineffable ; and it is just this distinctness and particularity that renders one self so entirely impenetrable directly by another. Thus identity, finitude, exclusiveness, uniqueness, and impenetrability are essential features of what we call a self, and constitute it a separate centre of interest, not to be broken down or invaded from without. And so the uniqueness and relative independence that mark each self are as essential features of it as is its identity amidst its changes. I can say not only " I am I and no one else," but I can also say " I am I and *like* no one else."

If, however, we should be asked how this can be known if no one can penetrate directly to another's experience so as to be able to compare it with his own ; the reply would be, that my experience is what it is owing to my particular position regarding the rest of the universe ; my time and place in the universe are peculiar to myself, are unique ; no one, therefore, can be a substitute for me. All my past experience of every kind, of terror and pain and grief, and also of love and joy, everything that has happened to me, all I have ever thought or felt or done has gone to constitute me just what I now am. Each experience has had more or less particularity to distinguish it from other similar experiences, happening under special conditions of time, place, etc., that can never have had an exact parallel elsewhere ; and all have conspired to build up the character of that unique ego, we call our self, that in each case is ineffable and incomparable with any other. Each self, then, may with truth be said to be a centre of *unique* interest.

If, then, the above description of the self be correct, each self must be regarded as a spectator of the universe from a point of view no other ever has occupied or ever

can occupy. To use an apt illustration employed by Mr Edward Carpenter, we are like spectators in a theatre. Each of us views the same universe ; but we each gaze on the wonderful spectacle from his own particular place in the theatre, so to speak ; and therefore each sees it from his own unique point of view, and consequently to none of us does it appear exactly the same as it does to the rest.

But further. Though it is beyond question that finite selves do stand to each other in this relation of mutual externality and exclusiveness, nevertheless this is not to be taken, as we have already observed, to rule out the possibility of their inclusion in a larger experience. Far from it. But if it be the truth that each finite self is a form, under negative or limiting conditions, of the Absolute ; then each finite ego is not only unique in itself, but is also on this very account a unique mode or appearance in a finite centre of the Absolute Spirit. Or we may put the matter in another way, and say, that in each finite centre we have the Absolute regarding itself from a unique point of view, a point of view, therefore, that could not possibly be exchanged for any other. And this, as consistent monists, we must take to be the case. We have already found it necessary to conclude that our finite selves, so far from being absolutely sundered from one another, are really included in some wider, more enveloping experience. And we may now go further and add that this uniqueness so far from supplying any reason against this conclusion is rather an additional argument in its support. In confirmation of this view it is invaluable to be able again to appeal to Wm. James, who, professional psychologist and avowed pluralist though he is, yet at times is of so much assistance to us in our present inquiry. In his Ingersoll Lecture on Immortality he gives us, in his own vivid and brilliant fashion, a really excellent exposition on the unique value each particular finite self, no matter how humble, must be regarded as having in relation to the Absolute. Such a

view of the self is no doubt strangely at variance with the purely psychological exposition of it given elsewhere, but is all the more valuable on that account. However, after referring to the incredible and intolerable number of beings which we, with our modern imagination, must believe to be immortal, if immortality be true, including in these immortals as we must, not merely the human inhabitants of the globe and their countless millions of ancestors, but also the beasts themselves, who also have their claims to continuity of existence, he utters a needful warning, which we will quote verbatim, because of its value and impressiveness: "You take," he tells us, "these swarms of alien kinsmen as they are *for you*, an external picture painted on your retina, representing a crowd oppressive by its vastness and confusion. As they are for you, so you think they positively and absolutely are. *I* feel no call for them, you say, therefore there *is* no call for them. But all the while, beyond this externality which is your way of realizing them, they realize themselves with the acutest internality, with the most violent thrills of life, 'Tis you who are dead, stone-dead, and blind, and senseless, in your way of looking. You open your eyes upon a scene of which you miss the whole significance. Each of these grotesque or even repulsive aliens is animated by an inner joy of living as hot or hotter than that which you feel beating in your own private breast. The sun rises and beauty beams to light his path. To miss the inner joy of him, as Stevenson says, is to miss the whole of him."¹ Seldom, we believe, has the inadequacy of the merely psychological or descriptive method of treating the self been more vigorously exhibited. In order that the true nature and significance of the self may be known, it must, says James, be studied not merely from the external point of view, but from within. He continues: "The universe, with every living entity which her resources create, creates at the same time a call for that entity, and

¹ "Immortality" (Ingersoll Lecture), pp. 76, 77.

an appetite for its continuance—creates it, if nowhere else, at least within the heart of the entity itself. It is absurd to suppose simply because our private power of sympathetic vibration with other lives gives out so soon, that in the heart of infinite being itself there can be such a thing as plethora or glut or supersaturation.” And he adds, “We need, then, only say that through them (*i.e.* through these countless beings or selves, entities he calls them), as through so many diversified channels of expression, the eternal Spirit of the Universe affirms and realizes its own infinite life.” After this splendid, inspiring, monistic outburst James lapses, it is true, once more into an external theistic view of God, quite incompatible with this absolutism. But this sudden return to pluralism does not lessen the force of his preceding exposition, which goes to show how, by the interior study of the nature of the self, we are led almost irresistibly to a metaphysic, which regards each finite self as a unique and therefore indispensable centre for the expression of the life of the Infinite or Absolute Spirit.

This monistic view of the finite self and its relation to the Absolute, however, inevitably brings up once more the question how far it is possible for us to form any true idea of the process whereby the Absolute Being becomes differentiated thus into the almost infinite number and variety of finite centres whilst still retaining its unbroken unity with itself. This question, it will be remembered, confronted us when in Chapter VI. we were endeavouring to ascertain what is to be understood by a Perfect Experience or Perfection. As, however, we shall have to return to this question again in another connection in the following chapter we can afford here to be comparatively brief. But as it is a subject intimately bound up with that of the self's negativity some more detailed reference to it is called for at the present juncture.

There are, so we saw, a certain class of thinkers who maintain that the idea of such a process as self-differentia-

tion actually taking place within the being of the Absolute would be so logically inconsistent, so entirely self-contradictory, as to be altogether out of keeping with our conception of the Absolute as the eternally Perfect One. If this be so, then, apparently we are driven to endorse the old Platonic doctrine of the eternal pre-existence of the finite ego. Dr M'Taggart accordingly advocates with much plausible elaboration the view that finite selves are not the product of a creative temporal process, but are in themselves, *i.e.* in their own intrinsic, fundamental nature eternal differentiations of the Absolute, and therefore really without beginning and without end. They do not, he holds, begin to exist but only to appear in the stream of time.¹ Their apparent commencement must, consequently, be construed as only an illusion on their part, due to forgetfulness, the effect of the oblivious influence of their imprisonment in time ; an illusion, in truth, which it is their very vocation to overcome and transcend. According to such a view the evolution of experience resolves itself into a process of recovery or reminiscence, whereby the soul becomes disillusioned of its error, and regains the knowledge of its true nature as eternal, a knowledge of itself which it lost when its self-consciousness became submerged, drenched, and confused by its immersion in the flux of time. But does not such a view of the finite ego seem to involve us in almost as many difficulties as it enables us to escape ? Whence, we are obliged to inquire, this strange illusion of time ? Whence, indeed, the flux of time itself ? And why should the finite ego make this descent into the overwhelming and oblivious flood ? Yet, on the other hand, how is it possible to conceive of finite selves beginning, absolutely, their real existence in time ? Can the Absolute without absurdity and contradiction be thought of as subject to this eternal eruption into a plurality of finite selves ? Is the Absolute, as an acute medical critic once asked us, to be

¹ See " Hegelian Dialectic," *passim*.

conceived of as afflicted with a sort of perpetual, spiritual small-pox? Can we, without stultifying ourselves, accept such an interpretation as rendering a correct account of the ultimate nature of things? It seems, then, at first sight as though in regard to so profound and abstruse a subject the only appropriate, indeed the only possible, philosophical attitude for our finite human mind to assume is that of a reverent agnosticism.

And this in truth is, as we saw, the attitude for the most part assumed by absolutist thinkers. That there is unity and that there is diversity in the universe cannot, they admit, be reasonably disputed, but the *how* and the *why* of the process by which the Absolute One differentiates itself into the countless number of finite selves that undoubtedly appear and are included within the compass of its infinite being, they affirm lies altogether beyond any knowledge or experience possible to finite intelligence. We can, so they say, only know the Absolute Spirit as he is for us, not as he is for himself, and that even our highest attainments in art, in poetry, in religion, can do no more than give us symbols which, to quote Matthew Arnold, we throw out at a vast Reality, the knowledge of whose intrinsic nature must necessarily ever be beyond our reach. With the ancient poet they exclaim: Canst thou by searching find out God? Canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection? It is high as heaven, what canst thou do? Deeper than Sheol, what canst thou know? (Job vii. 11). This attitude of metaphysical agnosticism it is important to observe is not that assumed by a certain class of monistic philosophers only, but often that adopted towards the Absolute whom they name God by many of the ablest and most brilliant Christian thinkers as well.¹

Now for our part we frankly confess such a position seems eminently unsatisfactory whether in philosophy or in religion. For if I do not know what the nature of the Great Reality is in and for itself, but only as it is for

¹ *E.g.* Sir W. Hamilton and Dean Mansel.

me, how can I possibly judge whether the symbols I throw out at it hit the mark or not, and if they miss, how near they come to it? If I know the Absolute only as it appears to me, how do I know but that what it is in itself may be totally different; as different, say, as is my sensuous experience of light from those undulations of the "luminiferous ether," by which science tells me it is conditioned? A symbol unquestionably supposes some true and so far exact knowledge of the thing symbolized. Such knowledge may no doubt be very general; nevertheless, so far as it goes, it must be real. But to throw out symbols at a Great Reality which is at the same time acknowledged to be in itself totally unknown and unknowable would surely be an irrational and futile exercise. It may indeed have for our piety the savour of a becoming humility to exclaim: How great is the Eternal! And how far beyond our poor powers to find him out! But there are other virtues besides humility required both in religion and in philosophy. May we not then brace our metaphysical courage to the great adventure, and, seeing the Absolute, if there be an Absolute, must be assumed to be implicit in all the fulness of its perfection in each finite centre, trust that something of its true and proper character may be open to the discovery of a more daring, a more penetrative, but none the less reverent insight? We believe it was Auguste Comte who once sceptically declared that no ingenuity of man would ever avail to discover the constituent elements of the fixed stars. And yet the means of such discovery were already in human hands in the shape of the simple prism, and to-day we know as surely what elements go to constitute the star Sirius as we do those that compose our own earth. May not our finite human ego be the metaphysical prism, wherewith it is possible for us to discover the true nature of that source and ground of all life and experience which we name the Absolute? We believe it is, and we will proceed briefly to indicate how.

And first let us recall what we have learnt already respecting the ego or principle of identity in consciousness as both object and subject. We saw that in every form of consciousness, even in the lowest within reach of our analysis, there must be presumed to be present the element of awareness, the earliest form of the cognitive principle in experience. Out of this primitive internal difference or "polarity" in the course of individual evolution countless differentiations proceed, manifold subordinate selves are developed, each one having for its basis some distinctive, emotional interest. There is the self of ambition, the self of avarice, the self of fatherhood or motherhood, the æsthetic self, the combative or militant self, and there are a score of others. No human ego exists who has not within him at each moment a great number of these emotional centres, every one of which is, or is capable of becoming, as we have said, a sort of subordinate self; and yet all are included within the one principle of identity we each denote when we use the pronoun *I*. Here, then, in concrete experience we have, as a matter of fact, even the finite ego, by a sort of inherent, creative activity, differentiating itself to a certain extent into many minor, inclusive selves, without thereby breaking up its basic unity. And there is no explaining away this fact. May we not then well ask whether this is to be taken as throwing no light whatever on the ultimate mystery of the universe, namely, how the one absolute, all-inclusive, immediate Experience or Self also exfoliates into all the variety of countless centres of experience or finite, identical selves, and without thereby incurring the disruption of its unity? It is assuredly no vain metaphor, no mere hyperbole, that calls each finite self a microcosm; not without profound reason has man been regarded as the measure of the universe.

And further. It is worth while noting the fact, which psychology correctly points out, namely, that each such centre of emotional interest has its own history, its own

set of memories, so that our recollections of the past very largely gather round and are dependent on these subordinate centres of emotional interest within us. We remember best what we attend to, but we attend to what most interests us; and what interests us does so because it appeals to some subordinate, emotional centre in our complex life. The vividness, the detailed contents of our memory, and their recoverability, are very largely determined by the intensity of these emotional interests. The memory of the mother's and the lover's heart are proverbial.¹ Each one of us is, thus, a single ego appearing under a great number and variety of forms in those subordinate selves which it includes. Each of us is a microcosm, the subject of endless, internal activities, conflicts, and possible if not actual tragedies. We know, we resist, we conquer, we control ourselves continually; and by resisting, controlling, and subordinating these minor selves we rise in the scale of being. And yet with all this complex development our fundamental unity or identity is neither broken up nor destroyed.

Let us briefly recur once more to the case of genius. In the great poet or dramatist these intense, emotional activities become creative; round these centres of interest and out of them he constructs the personalities of his plays. But all is the evolution, the expression, the exfoliation, as Walt Whitman would say, of his own deep immediate experience. There is in the great creative genius a vast voluminous nature to begin with, and out of this greatness of immediate being his wonderful creations arise. They, so to speak, exhale from within him naturally, sometimes apparently without effort, so that at the moment of inspiration he has simply to let himself

¹ Split personalities, as they are known to abnormal psychology, might be adduced here as further evidence of the evolution of many selves out of a single self. But we hesitate to call in the testimony of abnormal, mental phenomena. Still it is worth while to direct attention to them as possibly bearing on our subject. (See Morton Prince's work on "The Dissociation of a Personality.")

go, as we say, *i.e.* let himself be controlled by his genius as though by some higher and extraneous power. Let any one study the creations of any great dramatist or epic poet—Homer, Dante, Shakespeare,—let him, so to speak, enter into and follow out the immanent dialectic of the great emotions concerned; let him mark their creative intensity and consistency; and by so doing, we venture to say he will get a truer and deeper insight into the problem of creation, of how the one can become many without the sacrifice of its unity, than by perusing a score of merely *à priori* or abstract, metaphysical treatises. We must, then, get back to concrete experience of the very highest order, and see what happens there; we must, let us repeat, be in the truest and fullest sense empirical, if we would adequately interpret the nature of the Absolute Reality. If we do so we believe we shall be rewarded by the discovery that in us and through us the creative genius of the Absolute is always more or less at work disclosing its nature, but that in minds of the highest order of genius we approach nearest to a true knowledge of the nature and creative activity of the Absolute which religion names God. In this direction we are confident relief may be found from the burden of that agnosticism which has so much and for so long oppressed philosophers and divines alike.¹

Having now thus briefly referred to the somewhat abstruse and difficult subject of the origin of finite centres and their appearance in the so-called stream of time, let us return to the consideration of the question respecting their final destiny. It will, of course, be seen at once that their immortality, if they are immortal, is inseparably

¹ If the reader would desire a further exposition of this process of exfoliation, let him turn to the closing pages of the first volume of Prof. Bosanquet's Gifford Lectures. Borrowing his illustration from Dante's creative genius, Prof. Bosanquet makes a very able, and, in our judgment, not unsuccessful attempt to relieve our agnosticism on the point under discussion, namely, how the One can reveal itself in the manifold and yet remain one with itself.

connected with, is in truth dependent on, the perpetuity of their negative aspect. If that should be broken down or dissolved away, then they would blend or fuse together, and thus sink back once more into the undistinguished or undifferentiated unity of the Absolute whence they primarily emerged. Is this, then, their final goal ?

Naturally we turn in the first place to inquire whether any answer to this question can be obtained from biological science. We may set aside the materialistic hypothesis that the self is but an epiphenomenon, a product merely of the molecular and chemical functioning of the brain, as hopelessly out of harmony with many of the most patent and indubitable facts of consciousness. But even if we surrender materialistic theories, does it follow that the soul is therefore immortal ? And here it is necessary to make a distinction. It is quite possible that the self or soul may not be a mere by-product of the chemical changes of the brain, may even survive bodily death, and yet may not on that account be what we mean by immortal. Its survival might be only temporary, might indeed be but a stage towards its final reabsorption into the Infinite, or at least into some larger, more inclusive life or experience. Has, then, science anything to say respecting the permanence of the individual ? In answer to this question it may be said that of recent years science has made various attempts, and not altogether unsuccessfully in our opinion, to deal with this vital question. And one way has been by endeavouring to trace the evolution of the principle of individuality.

But here another important distinction ought to be observed, that, namely, between the terms personality and individuality. We have already directed attention to what we must hold to be the true significance of the term person. We said it had a narrower meaning than the term self, the term person denoting particularly that form of consciousness wherein the self distinctly

recognizes its exclusiveness of other selves and the externality of the relations it sustains towards them. Individuality we would define as further signifying more than merely distinct personality. It would, we think, conduce much to clearness if we were to keep, at all events for the purpose of the present inquiry, close to its etymological meaning. An individual would thus denote a self which can never be divided or split up into minor selves so as to lose its original unity; nor be finally dissolved or re-absorbed, as, conceivably, a merely animal self or imperfectly developed human person might, into some larger, more inclusive life or consciousness. And so the evolution of the principle of individuality would signify the further advance of personality in uniqueness, coherency, and other essential qualities, finally issuing in a self permanently and intrinsically incapable of either division or dissolution; those disintegrating forces, whether within or without, which once were apparently hostile, now becoming subordinated and controlled so completely as to be merely instrumental to the ego's self-fulfilment or self-expression.

Bearing in mind, then, these two important distinctions—namely, that between mere survival of bodily death and inherent immortality, and again between personality and individuality as above defined—let us glance for a moment or two at the testimony in support of immortality to be derived from the evolution of the principle of individuality as it is traced for us by biological science. It will not be necessary for our purpose to go into the evidence in full detail; we will content ourselves with two references which we think will be sufficient to enable the reader to see for himself the direction in which modern science would seem to be moving, and at the same time to appreciate in some measure the nature of its testimony.

And in the first place we will turn again to M. Bergson's Huxley Lecture, already quoted in our introductory chapters; and then as our second witness we will cite an

excellent and instructive little manual by Mr Julian Huxley, published under the auspices of the Cambridge University Press, entitled, "The Individual in the Animal Kingdom." Both these writers it will, we trust, be conceded are sufficiently representative authorities of the trend of modern science for our present purpose.

Turning first to M. Bergson, we note that as a Vitalist he cannot of course regard consciousness materialistically, *i.e.* as a mere by-product of the molecular forces and changes of the brain. In his view of it life or consciousness (for they are co-extensive) is an entity quite distinct from matter, an entity, indeed, which uses matter as instrumental to its evolution and therefore not to be confounded with it. To employ his own illustration, consciousness passes through matter as through a tunnel in its effort to reach its goal. In the course of its passage certain tendencies and potentialities, which at the beginning were, so to speak, fused and undifferentiated, are brought to precision in the form of distinct personalities. The function of matter is to be an opponent force over against consciousness, offering resistance to it; and this resistance, which consciousness everywhere meets with, calls forth in these personalities the effort of what M. Bergson terms self-creation. We must assume, at least we should suppose so, that if this be the function matter discharges in relation to Life's evolution, it must certainly be thought to have a structure specifically adapted to play so vastly important a part. Matter, says M. Bergson, thus gives opportunity to personalities to test their creative force and to increase it. Consciousness, however, not only has this creative force or activity, but what is of equally vital importance, it is possessed of memory as well. The essential function of memory is, of course, to accumulate and retain the experience of the past. As regards memory M. Bergson takes precisely the same view of the function of the brain as does Wm. James in his Ingersoll Lecture. It is quite as truly, he thinks, an

instrument of forgetfulness as it is of retention. It performs, to use the phraseology of Wm. James, a sort of permissive function, *i.e.* it exercises selective control over the past, retaining what is most needful for the purposes or exigencies of practical life, and excluding what for the time being is not required. M. Bergson, like Wm. James, however, believes that in the larger trans-marginal or subliminal region of consciousness, as it is called, nothing is ever really forgotten, but that all the past is there stored up and preserved. Once more, in addition to these great primary powers of creative activity and memory, there is what he terms the unbroken and indivisible continuity of consciousness. This if metaphysically interpreted would, of course, be the identical self or ego, though naturally M. Bergson as a Heracleitean pragmatist would not admit it. Restricting his view of Life to that of the scientific biologist *pur sang*, M. Bergson asks whether, if we take into account the creative activity of consciousness, its accumulated and stored-up memory of the past, and still further its unbroken continuity, does it not seem more likely that its *élan* or forward impulse will continue beyond what we, owing to our imperfect information, regard as its death, than that it should at that point of its imperfectly accomplished career suddenly and for ever cease. And so when we thus come carefully to study and ponder the evolution of Life or Consciousness and its real significance even from the merely biological standpoint, it certainly does seem as though it were the more reasonable supposition that in its passage through matter consciousness in the form of human personalities becomes, to use M. Bergson's words, "tempered like steel and tests itself for a higher existence." And so, reverting to his former illustration, he thinks that in the human personality consciousness would seem at last to have emerged from the tunnel though everywhere else it appears to have remained imprisoned. All inferior forms of life correspond, so M. Bergson thinks, to the arrest of

something which in man has succeeded at length in overcoming the resistance of matter and expanding freely, displaying true personalities (or, as we should prefer to term them, individualities), who with their powers of memory and will, and their control over the past and future, make it no longer repugnant to reason to suppose that in man, though perhaps in man only, consciousness in the form of these distinct and developed personalities pursues its path beyond this earthly life.¹ Such is a summary of the somewhat cautious result M. Bergson arrives at concerning human immortality by approaching the subject entirely from the standpoint of biological science.

And now let us turn to the second author we have selected, namely, Mr Julian Huxley. This writer frankly recognizes the inadequacy of the merely descriptive, scientific method in dealing with the subject of evolution. It is, he says, only when the biologist and philosopher join hands that we begin to comprehend the whole process. For evolution is not merely change, but progressive change; and progressive change means a movement of a definite kind in a definite direction, namely, towards the production of perfect Individuality. And this movement towards perfection is an essential feature of Life, without which Life would cease to be Life. And so in our attempt to interpret the real significance of the movement of Life as a whole, seeing it is thus an essentially evolutionary process, we must first strive to attain, in Mr Huxley's words, "a reasoned criterion of Individuality." And then, having ascertained what precisely we are to understand by Individuality, we have next to trace the evolutionary advance of this principle through individuals, in an ever-ascending scale, till it reaches its goal in the production of Personalities who shall be its complete embodiment and expression. Such, then, is the task of the evolutionist, who should unite in himself the rôle of both biologist and philosopher.

¹ See *Hibbert Journal*, Oct. 1911, p. 43.

Now one of the main characteristic features of what we term an Individual is independence of the controlling forces of the outer or material world. And by independence in this connection is meant the sort of independence that belongs, for instance, to the great man or the great inventor. Such individuals do not seek to sunder themselves from matter so as to stand out of all relation to it and to do without it, but to use it for their own ends or purposes; in other words, by independence is here meant the independence of an individual, who, whilst controlling matter, is not himself in turn controlled by it. A perfectly evolved individual would thus be able, says Mr Huxley, to exclaim with Nietzsche's Zarathustra, "Accidents no longer happen to me, for all that could now happen to me would be my own." And so he proceeds to trace for us in brief outline the progressive development of this principle of Individuality from amoeba to man. He shows how as Individuality advances the principle of unity in heterogeneity becomes more and more explicit, first as an ever-growing complexity in physical organization, and then as an ever-growing complexity of conscious process; and by this means a continuous widening of control is effected over the material world. Life, starting its career as it did with only single organic cells, could not possibly perfect the principle of Individuality in any such simple beings as these; and so adopted the expedient of reproduction, whereby it attempted to realize it in a succession of organic types of ever-growing complexity, known as colonial organisms or the metazoa. But by the adoption of such an expedient it was confronted by the problem of death, which, by terminating the career of each individual in turn, nullified the work that had so far been done. Accordingly Life found itself in the position of an artist, who should be constantly at work producing pictures of ever-increasing beauty and perfection, but only to find each in turn destroyed by some ruthless and resistless power. And so Life sought

again to remedy the defect of its method by adopting another and better one, namely, by seeking to perfect the principle in relation to the life of the race or species as a whole, in what we term the social organism, which should outlive indefinitely any single individual, but to the perpetuity and advancement of which the interests of all single individuals should be subordinated. And yet not even so could the goal be reached. The disintegrating forces of the material world would in the end still triumph even over such an organism as the social, since its equilibrium with the material world must still be more or less unstable ; and the species must, therefore, either be transmuted into a higher, more perfect species, or else perish. And, as a matter of fact, all species as well as individuals must and do at last in their turn succumb to the inevitable and invincible disintegrating power of death. And so the idea at length arises of a perfect individual as something quite unknown to the senses, *i.e.* as something infinitely superior to any conceivable organic perfection, individual or social. A perfect individual shall be a spiritual, not an organic being ; a being of perfect internal harmony and of perfect independence in the sense above defined ; he shall be eternal, subduer alike of space and time. There is, Mr Huxley tells us, an actual line of advance to be detected in Life's evolution towards such perfection. But finally to reach her goal, Life needs, so it would seem, to continue her progress beyond what we call death. And now, says Mr Huxley, comes along the psychical researcher with his automatic writing and cross-correspondence seeking to give us rigorous demonstration of the real post-mortem existence of so-called discarnate or disembodied spirits. If such actually exist they crown Life's progress, he says. But for the present, he adds, this must be regarded as mere speculation. "The Zoologist has strayed, he must return to his mutton and his amoeba." And so with these words he passes on. Nevertheless, for this biological

support of our main conclusions in the present inquiry we may well be grateful.

There are, then, two essential points for which we derive invaluable support from biological science. First, it is evident science is itself now beginning to discern evidence of the evolution of selves into permanent individualities, not of their extinction at death or ultimate reabsorption into the deeps of the Infinite Life. And secondly, we seem warranted in the conclusion that the direction in which Life as a whole has from the commencement been advancing is towards the establishment, as the culmination of the whole evolutionary process, of finite centres or selves, distinct personalities as M. Bergson terms them, permanent individuals as we prefer to say, who shall be fit organs to experience and to express the nature of the Ultimate Reality, express it, that is to say, in its true and proper character as the Absolute Perfection.

Nevertheless, we shall be confronted with serious objections to these conclusions, objections of quite a different kind from any arising out of biological science, and which we must therefore endeavour, if we can, to meet before we go further. Is there not, it will be asked, some inherent impossibility, some deep-rooted and incurable contradiction, far more serious than any merely logical inconsistency, in the very desire of the finite for Perfection? Would not the attainment of such a goal necessarily signalize the extinction of the finite individual as such? In striving for Perfection, are we not, after all, chasing the impossible; human moths striving to reach the burning, all-consuming sun? Does not the experience of Perfection mean essentially the extinction of finitude? These sentiments have been exquisitely expressed by a poet in the following lines:

" Also, there is in God
Which being seen would end us with a shock
Of pleasure. It may be that we should die,

As men have died, of joy, all mortal powers
 Summed up and finished in a single taste
 Of superhuman bliss ; or, it may be
 That our great latent love, leaping at once
 A thousand years in stature—like a stone
 Dropped to the central fires, and at a touch
 Loosed into vapour—should break up the terms
 Of separate being, and as a swift rack,
 Dissolving into heaven, we should go back
 To God."

DOBELL.¹

If ever the human ego rose so high, the poet says in the above lines, as to experience Perfection, then in that one bright blissful moment it would expire of its joy, it would in such superhuman ecstasy swoon away into the Infinite Life whence it came, it would "die of the kisses of its God." There are no doubt those in whom such a destiny would awaken no strong revulsion of feeling, but even be welcomed as a fit termination of all the turmoil and travail of their finite life with its inevitable sorrow, disappointment, and care. There are, indeed, not a few who say that for them no immortality, even of bliss, has any real attractions ; and to minds so constituted such a destiny as extinction in a moment of ecstatic joy would no doubt be anticipated without a tremor, and awaited with calm acquiescence and content. Our belief in immortality, seeing there are at least a few not ignoble souls who declare they have no desire for it, must therefore be based not on subjective grounds alone,² not merely on personal desire however strong, which might be fairly interpreted as merely a matter of temperament carrying with it no evidential value or promise of fulfilment, but on some more objective grounds. We must seek, that is to say, in the nature

¹ Quoted in Vaughan's "Hours with the Mystics," bk. vii. chap. i.

² We may, however, remind the reader that, in the highest form of cosmic or mystic consciousness, immortality passes beyond a mere object of desire, and becomes a direct and immediate experience. But it is difficult to make this experience of evidential value to those who have never had it.

of things, in fact and reason, for the support and security of our belief.

Impressive and plausible as the poet's view above quoted at first sight undoubtedly appears to be, yet on more careful consideration we are convinced the very reverse will be found to be the truth ; and for the following reasons amongst others. In the first place, if the finite self could as such but once attain this blissful sense of God, this immediate experience of the divine life and perfection, then surely it is more reasonable to suppose that, even were it not immortal before, yet when it reached this goal of its striving it would attain immortality also as an inseparable element of the very experience itself. Immortality would seem far more consonant with such an experience than instant death or extinction ; for what is such bliss but in its very essence immortal bliss ? How, then, can we conceive of it as entering the consciousness of any finite ego even for a moment, unless that finite ego were as such already immortal, or unless its very entrance conferred immortality ? And it is important to add that this is the indubitable testimony of all those who, for instance, like the poet Tennyson, actually attain this sense of Infinite Perfection. Death, or what amounts to the same thing, extinction by being absorbed or lost in the Absolute, becomes, as Tennyson said it became for him, " a laughable impossibility " ; and all fear of it expires in the transcendent bliss of the Life Eternal.¹

Again ; it is impossible to believe that the whole evolutionary process should in the end turn out to contain a palpable contradiction at its very root, as a part of its very essence ; for such would manifestly, so it seems to us, be the case, if ultimate extinction by being absorbed into the undifferentiated unity of the Absolute were the inevitable goal of all things finite. We should have to suppose either that the whole process comes

¹ See Bucke's " Cosmic Consciousness," *passim*.

full circle, terminating where it began, commencing in empty unity and ending in empty unity again ; or else that though there is, indeed, an endless series of finites, yet that each in its turn is in the end reabsorbed or assimilated by this all-creating and all-devouring Absolute. In either case the meaning and result of the whole evolutionary process would lie beyond itself, since no finite ego, however highly evolved, however intrinsically noble, beautiful, and pure, would be itself an end, but all, high and low alike, would be but instruments for the enrichment in some way or other of the life of the Absolute. Such an interpretation of life is no doubt presented to us in certain negative philosophies, both East and West ; but life viewed in the light of its evolution, as the story from amœba to man is unfolded for us by the most recent science, contains, so it seems to us, a far deeper significance. We conclude, therefore, on the ground of the intrinsic rationality of the evolutionary process itself, taking it as a whole, that the ultimate goal of the élan of life is not the extinction of all finite selves by their reabsorption into the Infinite, but immortality ; immortality, if not for all, then at least for the most developed. The negative as well as the positive aspect of finite experience is, we hold, necessarily deepened and strengthened as evolution advances, both towards the material world and towards other finite selves ; each element or aspect needing and at the same time supporting the other. They are correlatives, equally essential to Life and its development. And, therefore, the doctrine of reabsorption, so far as the rational interpretation of the evolutionary process is concerned, seems a quite un-called-for and gratuitous hypothesis.

And now let us consider somewhat further the characteristic quality of that life or experience to which we apply the term immortal. And here it should be observed that immortal life is not the same thing as

mere continuance of existence in time. Immortality has special reference to the transcendental or eternal aspect of experience as contrasted with the temporal, the apparent, the phenomenal, the changing. Eternity and endless time must not here be confounded as they so often are in the popular mind. Certainly, if there is no survival of death, if the mind be no more than a mere phenomenon of the brain, then necessarily all experience of whatever degree or quality must cease at death. Yet survival of bodily death is not what we mean strictly speaking by immortality, at least in the present connection. It is quite possible to conceive of the mind as surviving bodily dissolution, without having attained the experience of what we mean by the eternal or immortal life. What, then, are we to understand by immortality? What is the nature of the experience it connotes?

And, first, let us call attention to the two apparently opposite views, either of which it is possible to hold, on the immortality of the finite ego, views to which we have already alluded. Apparently opposite we say, because, though they seem incompatible, they may nevertheless not be so irreconcilable as would appear on the surface. One view holds that immortality is natural or intrinsic, the other that it is acquired as the result of the ego's development, the fruit of its upward struggle towards perfection. Dr M'Taggart, as we have already seen, represents the first view; the second view is what has appropriately been termed "conditional immortality." Dr M'Taggart, we saw, regards each finite centre as eternal. He holds that it does not begin to exist, but only to appear in time. No self or ego ever actually began to be; each is an eternal differentiation of the Absolute. In this case consciousness of immortality would only be, as we saw, the attainment of the knowledge by direct experience of its true nature on the part of the finite ego, not the acquirement of a

new quality as the result of effort and discipline. The process of the self's evolution would thus be an upward movement of knowledge and immediate experience towards a true and complete realization of what it eternally and essentially is. This view has had able advocates, both East and West, amongst philosophers and poets.

The second view of immortality possible is, as we have intimated, that which regards it as the result of the self's development in time, what in biology would be termed an acquired character, the ripe fruit of Life's upward struggle when it attains its culmination, that is to say, when it attains to a transcendental and immediate experience of the Absolute's perfection. Immortality would in such a case be only conditional. Yet it might, as we have hinted, be possible in some degree to harmonize these two apparently divergent views, were we to suppose, on the one hand, with Dr M'Taggart, that the ego or self, though in reality an eternal differentiation of the Absolute only appearing, not beginning to exist in time, yet on the other hand that its experience or intuitive consciousness of this its true nature is the result of its temporal evolution through struggle and discipline. With this glance, then, at some such possible reconciliation of these apparently discrepant views let us pass once more to the consideration of concrete experience.

There are two distinct types of immediacy of which every one is conscious, and which should always be carefully discriminated. The first, the lower form, is entirely *sentient*, the other is what we usually term *emotional*. These two generic types of immediate experience not only differ qualitatively, but also in the conditions that determine their emergence in consciousness. The first or sentient immediacy is determined and controlled by the relation of the self to external or extended reality ; whereas in the case of the second

type of immediacy, the emotional, the determination or control is ideal, that is to say, comes from within ; in other words, the antecedent must be sought, not in any activity or change of extended reality, but in some change in the mind itself. Let us take one or two simple illustrations. I am startled, suppose, by a sudden flash of lightning followed by a peal of thunder. Now these sensations of sight and sound do not, of course, create themselves, *i.e.* do not emerge unbidden, unevoked ; nor, again, are they determined by any antecedents in the mind itself. They are conditioned by certain changes in so-called external reality ; in reality, that is to say, that comes to me as from without. There are certain activities and changes in extended substance, both in nature and in my own bodily organism, antecedent to my experience ; or, to use Mr Mark Baldwin's expressive and somewhat picturesque language, there is something that forces itself upon me, that rides, as it were, full-armed through my walls and compels recognition ; in other words, I am *externally* determined or controlled.¹ And now suppose I am in receipt of a letter conveying the sad intelligence that some dearly-loved, life-long friend has suddenly and unexpectedly passed away. I am at once conscious of a very deep and poignant immediate experience, which I qualitatively distinguish by the term—*grief*. In this case it certainly is not the sight of the white paper with black ink-marks, nor any other organic change, that occasions me this suffering, as when the prick of a pin, for instance, puts me to physical pain. You may see the same words as I do and yet not weep. The emotion is determined by the idea that arises in my mind, the idea of my friend, and the thousand attendant memories associated with him who is now no more. In this case, as well as in my sensations of sight and sound, the experience is immediate ; it is of the nature of what we term generically

¹ "Thought and Things," vol. i. p. 50, note.

feeling ; but in the first instance I am externally, and in the second I am internally, determined and controlled ; in the one case the determining condition is some change in external or extended reality ; in the other the antecedent condition is internal or ideal. So much seems perfectly clear.

Secondly, there are intermediate or transitional forms of immediacy, such, for example, as despondency and the sex-feelings, which cannot be classed as, strictly speaking, pure sensation or pure emotion. In the former case, for instance, our mental depression, as we all know, may equally well be due to some organic, perhaps some hepatic, disorder, as it may, say, to some serious financial loss, or other disappointment. Were we, then, to classify our immediate experiences we should have to discriminate at least three kinds or degrees. There would be, first, pure sentiency ; and secondly, transitional forms, which for convenience we might term sentient emotions ; and there would be, in the third place, pure emotions, in which the element of sense would have entirely disappeared. To the last category belong, in our judgment, all our higher emotions represented by what we call our religious, our æsthetic, and our intellectual interests ; or the Good, the Beautiful, and the True. All these activities of our nature have emotional value, but are not organically stimulated. A true psychology would, we believe, report that the very highest immediacies are almost, if not completely, free from the element of sentiency ; or if any be traced, such element would be found to be, strictly speaking, foreign and irrelevant to the essential nature of the emotion itself, and due merely to the reflection into the emotion, or the association with it, of some sentiency arising from the correlative bodily affections or neurosis which may perhaps, though even this is by no means established, accompany every mental activity or change of whatever kind. On the other

hand, to regard, as do some psychologists, notably the late Wm. James, the sensational elements that accompany the bodily expression of our emotions as constituting the very essence of the emotions themselves, seems to us, we confess, the very acme of psychological absurdity and self-contradiction.¹

What, then, we contend for is, that the highest immediacies, at any rate, are in their own intrinsic and real nature free from the alloy of sense in so far as that they are not organically stimulated. The pure gold of emotion has, so to speak, been freed from all its sensational dross. And consequently, no matter what their lowly evolutionary origin may have been, such immediacies are so distinct, and some of them are of an order and value so high, that those who fully experience them may be said to have passed a "distinct degree" in evolution, and are worthy to be marked off as what science would term "mutations" in relation to all lower forms of experience. This transition from lower to higher forms of immediacy will come up for further consideration in our next chapter when we treat of the self-transcendency of the finite. What we are here concerned to observe is, that to this latter class of higher immediacies belongs certainly the experience of those religious geniuses, who have attained a direct apprehension of the Divine or Perfect Life in its own proper character. Such an experience, we maintain, is not sentient, is not organically stimulated, and in those who do thus enter into direct and immediate experience of divine perfection, the goal or climax of the evolutionary process has so far been reached, and so to speak justified. With the attainment of this goal they would

¹ This view of the emotions, we understand, has received an exceedingly severe, not to say fatal, blow, from more recent psychological experiments and observations. (See *Hibbert Journal*, Jan. 1913. Article by Dr D. F. Harris, "Consciousness as a Cause of Neural Activity.")

necessarily acquire the consciousness and the assurance of their immortality.

To understand why immortality should be considered as an attribute or quality at least of these higher orders of immediacy will not now perhaps be so very difficult. From what we have ascertained respecting the nature of the finite self, immortality, as distinguished from mere survival, would seem to be conditional on two main factors. The first is the self's negativity, under which we include the two aspects of uniqueness and exclusiveness, both towards the external material world, and towards other finite centres. A finite ego can, we have observed, say not only, "I am I and no one else" (exclusiveness), but also, "I am I and like no one else" (uniqueness). The second factor essential to immortality is unity and harmony of experience. Negativity alone might not be sufficient to insure immortality; if it be, then we must conclude all finite centres of experience or selves to be immortal, and perhaps eternal differentiations of the Absolute. But if this view should prove untenable, then we must conclude that immortality, if it be an attribute of the finite at all, is so only of those finite unique centres which have, besides their particularity, attained to complete unity and harmony of experience. Without such harmonious unity the stability of the finite self's existence might, to say the least, remain in danger and uncertainty. Now to attempt to reach perfect harmony or consistency of life on the basis of purely sense immediacy, that is on the basis of any one of our sensuous impulses or desires, is to attempt to unify on the basis of that which is in its essential nature variable and transitory. It is quite conceivable such a self might pass away through dissolution, *i.e.* by reason of a process of internal disintegration into some larger and more inclusive life or experience. Conflicting passions, impulses, desires within the centre, might prove mutually destructive, or they might die with the failure of the

bodily organism which supports them. Some such absorption of the self into a larger race consciousness is held by many to be the destiny of at least all the sub-human forms of life. Or, these various conflicting centres of emotional energy in the self, especially when largely sensuous in their nature, might conceivably break up by a kind of fission in the self into separate selves, and this may be taken to be foreshadowed in cases of so-called split personalities. In one way or another, then, apart from some permanent transcendental unification of experience, it is conceivable that the exclusiveness or independence of the finite self might come to an end or its unity be disrupted. Only on the basis of an immediate experience that is eternal, perfect, and all-inclusive, in other words of some divine immediacy, could the finite centre gain complete assurance of its immortality. Thus to unify, if we can, on the basis of some immediate and direct apprehension of the divine perfection would seem imperative ; for it is to unify on the basis of that which is unconditioned and uncontrolled by the chances and changes of the natural world and our own evanescent bodily organisms. The self with such an experience would be capable of surviving all the series of psychical events which happen in it through its relation to the extended universe ; it might control them, triumph over them without itself being ever again subject to them as in the days of its bondage to sense. Then it might, as we have seen, say with Nietzsche's Zarathustra, " Accidents do not happen to me." Such an achievement by the finite self would signify that it had become a unique and permanent organ for the expression of the Perfect Immediacy in its own proper character as inclusive harmony ; an imperishable note in the eternal symphony. This, if such a goal be attainable, and this we are to discuss in the next chapter, would indeed be a worthy termination to the long agony of the evolutionary process, the true home, the rest in eternal activity which

constitutes the only conceivable peace of aspiring souls.

We may rightly conclude, then, that what we call the self, its identity, its exclusiveness, its uniqueness, its inner significance and reality, cannot be explained in mere psychological terms as a series of psychical events, or as a collection of ideas, or as a flux or stream of consciousness. With Wm. James in one of his lucid monistic moods, we believe that the inner significance of other lives than our own exceeds all our powers of sympathy and insight ; that therefore not one self is needless ; that " the tiresomeness of an over-peopled heaven " is a purely subjective and illusory notion, a sign of our human incapacity ; that the Absolute has need perhaps eternally of all, however poor and even repulsive some of these alien selves may be to us ; that we must not measure the wants of the Absolute by our own puny needs.¹ So, then, each one of us may say to himself, however like me in character or behaviour another person may be, and however by sympathy or intuition he may read my thoughts and comprehend my motives, yet there is a point where I stand alone and inapproachable, a centre to which none can penetrate ; thoughts and immediate feelings are mine, unique experiences, that can never be exactly communicated to others. There is sacred ground on which I alone can stand, a Holy of Holies, into which I alone am permitted to enter, a function in relation to the Absolute none but I can fulfil, an experience no one else can share. This is assuredly what Plotinus meant, when he spoke of the flight of the Alone to the Alone ; and what the ancient psalmist also signified when he wrote of " the secret place in the Most High " ; and it is this uniqueness of each self in relation to the Absolute, as discharging a function no other can, that justifies the apparent extravagance of language in the mystic when sometimes he affirms, " God needs me as much as I need Him." Each self in its

¹ " Human Immortality," p. 72.

uniqueness is indispensable to the full revelation of the Absolute Life; all may be permanently needed, and therefore immortal. But of the more highly developed we may confidently say that, having attained to the direct experience of the Absolute's perfection, they can never pass away either by absorption or dissolution; for they are as immortal as is the bliss they enjoy.

CHAPTER XII

CAN WE EXPERIENCE THE PERFECT?—(*Concluded*)

(4) THE SELF-TRANSCENDENCY OF THE FINITE

SECTION A. *Introductory*

IN the present chapter we shall still be engaged with our inquiry concerning the goal of the religious quest. But our special object will now be to appeal directly to the concrete facts of life and experience, with a view to discover whether religion in its undoubted effort after perfection is thereby really seeking the extinction of its finite consciousness. The question, then, before us is whether the finite as finite can experience perfection; or whether such experience is not incompatible with its finitude.

Now in seeking an answer to this question it is essential to bear in mind that Reality's creative activity has a duality of aspects, which we may term respectively the *obverse* and the *reverse*. The self-transcendency of the finite in its evolutionary progress from one-celled organism to man is Reality's creative activity regarded on its *reverse* side. The *obverse* side is the same activity regarded as the Absolute's self-expression, or the revelation of its nature by self-determination. As has been pointed out in previous chapters, it belongs to the very essence of the Absolute Self to express or reveal its nature by self-limitation in a plurality of finites, without thereby ceasing to be infinite. And just as the Infinite reveals itself in the finite without thereby ceasing to be infinite, so also, on the other hand, does the finite indefinitely transcend itself without thereby ceasing to be finite. And there is

nothing impossible, nothing contradictory, nothing unintelligible, in either aspect of the creative evolutionary process, if in this connection we will but leave on one side our merely abstract conceptual logic as the sole criterion, and have recourse to actual concrete experience.

The *reverse* aspect of the Absolute's creative activity is, then, the evolutionary process regarded, so to speak, from beneath, from the standpoint of the finite consciousness. This is the aspect contemplated by science, the method of which is inductive, in that it seeks to ascend from the phenomenal many to their law or inclusive unity. But this, it will be remembered, is the only aspect admitted by the pragmatist or Bergsonian philosopher, who consequently declares there is no ultimate or fundamental unity, nothing eternal, that reveals itself; there is only movement and change. The perpetual flux being the whole Reality, the evolutionary process necessarily itself becomes creative, and so something absolutely new is said constantly to appear. Bare change, mere movement, activity *per se*, undirected force, the endless flow, becomes thus the only possible creative principle, and hence we have what is called creative evolution. M. Bergson's coin has thus only one side, the reverse. And yet, the strenuous denials of this Heraclitean philosophy notwithstanding, the coin has also another side—the obverse, *i.e.* the universe has also another aspect—the eternal; and it is this aspect which is contemplated by philosophy. Poetry and religion, too, in their respective ways regard the universe from the same point of view. By each the creative activity in evolutionary process is looked at in the light of its unity, or *sub specie æternitatis*, that is as the exfoliation of the One into the Many. The aim of philosophy is thus deductive. It starts, so to speak, from the *obverse* side of the universe, and seeks to understand it in its first principles; or, once more, to quote Mr Bradley, to comprehend it, not piecemeal or in fragments, but as a whole. The creative or

evolutionary process has then two aspects ; and though in itself one, may be regarded from two opposite or contrasted points of view.

Now the question, or rather the paradox, that seems to have chiefly perplexed those thinkers who, whilst believing in the reality of the Infinite, regard creation, not as an art, but as a fall, and the essence of sin, as of all evil, to lie in our negativity or finitude, and who therefore can see no other possible goal for the finite than ultimate absorption or dissolution into the Infinite, the question, we say, that seems chiefly to have perplexed such thinkers is, How can the finite be also infinite ? How can there be an infinite aspect to finite experience ? How can these opposites meet in one centre ? Can you, without flagrant contradiction, predicate finitude and infinity of the same subject ? Are not all selves, therefore, by reason of the inherent contradictoriness of their nature, destined to return in the end to the Infinite, to merge with other selves in the undistinguished being of the Absolute, as snow-flakes that fall on the ocean, or as " dewdrops that slip into the shining sea " ? The question to which we are seeking an answer briefly stated is then, Can the finite self as such experience directly or in immediate feeling the perfection of the Absolute ?

Now, rightly questioned, this is at all events what the finite self is really seeking in religion. It certainly does not aim at the dissolution of its finitude by absorption into the " Infinite All," whether such a destiny awaits it or not. The Shorter Catechism, for example, in its opening declaration, states what is the true object religion seeks in terms which for terseness could hardly be surpassed. " What is man's chief end ? " it asks. " Man's chief end," it replies, " is to glorify God, and to *enjoy Him for ever.*" In religion, then, the self seeks, not to be God, or to be lost in God, but to " *enjoy* " God ; or as we have ventured to express it, the movement of the *élan vital* metaphysically interpreted, is towards the production of finite selves,

not that shall be the Perfect Experience itself, but that shall experience the Perfect. But is such an experience possible? Or is to strive for it on the part of a finite self a hopeless and manifest inconsistency? That is the question, then, which it is our special purpose in the present chapter if possible to answer. But in seeking a solution of this problem it is obvious we must return again to the inquiry concerning the nature of what we term a Self that we may see what further can be learnt about it.

Now, in any attempt to understand or adequately interpret the inner significance of Life, it would seem to be almost inevitable that, not only the human personality, but every form of life should be regarded as a Self, that is, as a unique centre of interest, which is an end in itself and one with itself so long as it persists. Life as we know it never appears as diffused like an atmosphere or an ocean; but every form, from the lowest to the highest, seems to be an exclusive centre of interest. There is always individuality of a more or less complex character; there is always a *centre* of interest no matter how manifold and varied its organs and their functions may be. This individuality, this centre of interest, or self, is correlated physiologically with what is termed an organism, which in the lowest life-forms consists of a single cell with its nucleus.¹ Again, there is no ground to suppose, as do many physiologists and biologists, that there is any life without consciousness. In fact, to speak of life as purely organic without conscious interest, or of an interest without consciousness, seems meaningless. No forms of life fail to show some felt wants or desires, some conation or striving after self-preservation or self-satisfaction. The movements and functioning of organisms cannot be interpreted on the *inner* side except in terms of consciousness; they cannot be resolved into purely mechanical and chemical actions. Life, then, is always conscious; and all consciousness, so far as we know, appears in finite

¹ See Verworn's "General Physiology" (Eng. Trans.), pp. 56-8.

centres which we have termed selves. However faint or confused the consciousness may sometimes be, as for example when falling into or awakening from sleep, yet, confused or clear, all is experienced by some finite self, which, as we have said, is the subject or owner of the experience. In the light of this interpretation of life, there can be no real difference in meaning whether we call such centres of experience selves, souls, or spirits. We always mean by these terms to indicate finite centres of conscious interest.¹

An important question now arises and one of very great interest to philosophy, namely, can any inference concerning the nature of the Absolute be drawn from the foregoing biological facts? It seems no doubt a very startling assertion to make that the nature of absolute reality can be discovered already revealed in a single living cell. And yet are we not obliged to conclude that this is indeed the case? Seeing that all organic forms, when metaphysically regarded must be taken to be appearances of the Absolute, should we not naturally expect that the fundamental character of the Absolute would, in some measure at all events, be discoverable even in the humblest amongst them? For let us not forget that if Reality be present at all in any organism, it is wholly there; there, albeit implicitly, in its complete and undivided existence as Absolute Perfection. Let us rid our minds of the absurdity once for all that anything can be but a *part* or *portion* of the Absolute, as though the Absolute could exist in fragments. This view would

¹ Some scientists have indeed recently stated that metals show signs of life; that they grow tired, need rest, can be narcotized, poisoned, etc. We do not think the evidence so far is very conclusive, that this is the true interpretation of the phenomena observed, still less has it been shown that life as we have experience of it in organic forms originated in such inorganic life. So far as we are at present acquainted with it or can understand it, life appears in the form of unitary beings or individuals, biologically called organisms and psychologically selves.

be rank pluralism. The Absolute cannot be divided into parts or portions. If we think so then we are thinking loosely and inaccurately; we are contradicting ourselves and uttering foolishness. Well then, if the Absolute be present in each organic cell, and if it be wholly there, could it be there under a guise totally different from what it is in itself, in its own proper character? Such a view does not seem probable or consistent. For let us remember that, according to what we take to be the true view of the Absolute, it is not static, but essentially active and creative. Could it then be thus actively present even in the most primitive organisms without betraying in some measure the secret of its fundamental nature? We think not. Rather do we think it more reasonable to suppose that even in the very simplest and most primitive of these organic individuals we have already a veritable incarnation of the Absolute. If we be correct in this supposition then the very least of these organic cells must be implicitly the Infinite, and we may see therein minutely reflected as in a mirror the undisguised features of the Perfect Self. Again we ask, why should this not be so? What more likely, inevitable, and necessary? Let us pause a moment or two longer and reflect. We stated, it will be remembered, when referring to M. Bergson's "Creative Evolution," that the *élan vital* has no real significance except such as it receives from a metaphysical interpretation, and therefore that the purely scientific attitude and method must necessarily prove quite inadequate to any valid explanation of the evolutionary process. Science has presented to it for its investigation a long series of progressive organic forms, extending from earliest geological ages down to the present moment. But of itself, by the application exclusively of its own method and principles, unsupplemented and unaided by metaphysics, it is able to render no reason why progress should ever have taken place at all, nor can it discover any goal towards which the whole

movement is advancing. But now in the light thrown back over the whole process by the nature of the Ultimate Reality as revealed in the functioning of reason, as also in the aspirations and experiences of the highest religion, we can interpret, in a manner eminently satisfactory, the meaning of the whole élan of life, and can discover the final goal of all its undoubted upward movements. With the very first appearance of organic cells on this planet, no matter howsoever it came about, life, we said, started on its long evolutionary journey, having for its goal the attainment of Perfection. It will also be recollected that we discovered Perfection to be no mere abstract ideal, but the immediate experience of an absolute or divine Self. And now when we attempt to interpret the life of those microscopic unicellular organisms, which we are fully justified in believing were the earliest to people the earth and were our true first parents, we find we cannot do so without attributing to each a conscious centre of interest of the nature of what we mean by a self. Surely then we are warranted in saying that even in these primitive forms of life there is so far already disclosed the nature of that Absolute, to experience whose perfection is the real and ultimate aim of all life's strivings. The whole evolutionary process thus starts with a rudimentary self, and can only end with a self which has attained the blessedness of an immediate experience of Absolute Perfection. And that Absolute Perfection again is also a Self, an all-inclusive and perfectly harmonious Self. The whole process then may be summed up as the ever-advancing revelation or exfoliation of this Perfect Self, which manifests its nature first as the self of the humblest and most primitive organic cells, and by reason of its implicitness with its full, undivided perfection in each of such cells, gives them an element or aspect of infinitude. And it was the presence of the Infinite in the very earliest cells that determined the evolution of life, and still controls and guides it towards its destined end in man. Such we take to be the true

metaphysical interpretation of the fact of life's evolution. The presence, then, of the Absolute Self implicitly, that is under conditions and limitations, yet in its own proper character in each cell or finite centre, is the ground and explanation of the self-transcendency of the finite ; and, as we have said, is the only real key to the evolutionary process.

And here it may appropriately be remarked that, in the light of the foregoing, it would certainly be sheer blindness and folly to hold that the Absolute, regarded as an all-inclusive perfect experience, rejecting ultimate contradictions and unresolved discords and discrepancies, is no more than an *à priori* dream of monistic philosophers ; or the object of the pathological yearnings of swooning and self-hypnotized saints ; or that it is only the Utopia of world-weary minds seeking relief from their sense of personal responsibility and from their spiritual and ethical wrestlings, by what Wm. James calls a sort of *moral holiday*. Again, we can now see how the logical difficulty that troubled alike both Wm. James and Mr Bradley is already in a measure solved when we turn even to life's humblest forms, the difficulty, namely, how if reality be many it can also be one (James), or how if it be one it can also be many (Bradley). If the foregoing interpretation of the internal or psychic aspect of unicellular organisms be accepted, then the nature of ultimate Reality is already adumbrated in life's humblest beginnings. Here already there is one centre of interest, one self, manifesting in all the variety of its functions and activities. Here already is present the principle of the one in the many, or unity in diversity, which is fundamental to the nature of the Absolute itself. The Absolute is thus only the perfection of the same principle that appears first in these primitive unicellular organisms, and the whole evolution of life is but the progressive unfolding of this original principle.

And so the next fact of importance for us to note and

one which all the more recent investigations of biological science go to prove, is that, while finite centres or selves, we have every reason to believe, made their first appearance on this planet as unicellular organisms, yet they must not be looked upon as separate entities each existing in its own right and "strong in its solid singleness," like the monads of Leibnitz or the independent reals of Herbart. Rather must they be regarded as the appearance under the limitations of time and space of some larger more inclusive life or self. So far from individualism, which sunders existence from existence, or any form of radical pluralism, being a more logical and consistent view of finite experience, the very reverse is the truth. The real contradiction, the real impossibility rests in fact with a pluralistic view of life. The self-transcendency of the finite rightly interpreted is a perpetual affirmation of its real identity with the Absolute Self and thereby of its fundamental unity with all other existences from which it only appears superficially to be separated. There is no form of finite life without a sense of want, without desire. And desire is essentially active, is essentially an effort to be and to experience what at present it is not. It is thus a seeking for Reality because it is at present only imperfectly real. But on the other hand it could not desire what was altogether foreign to itself and quite outside it; the impulse is from within and is a sign that what it seeks is already implicitly there. So that we may say with truth that all feeling, all thought, all conation, all desire, all psychical activity of whatever sort, is possible to finite experience only by reason of the presence within it implicitly in all its perfection of a larger all-embracing Life, which philosophy recognizes as the undivided Absolute itself.

And now reverting to what we said respecting the duality of stand-points from which the whole process of evolution may be viewed, on what we have called the *obverse* side, or *sub specie æternitatis*, the process is the

exfoliation of the Absolute Experience, or the creative activity of the divine Artist, revealing his genius under conditions and limitations both of time and space in the experience and activities of finite centres or selves ; but viewed on the *reverse* side or from the *a posteriori* point of view, the view, that is to say, of the self-transcendent finite, it is life's quest for the perfect, the evolutionary ascent from the self of unicellular organisms to the self of man, when, at his highest and best, he attains direct and immediate experience of that Perfection of which the universe in time and space is the more complete expression. The first point of view, the creative, is that of the great genius himself, whose nature unfolds and reveals itself in the complexity of his artistic work. The second, on the other hand, is rather the point of view of the talented witness, whose effort is to ascend to the appreciation of genius in the reverse order, namely, from the product or expression to its source in the great creative emotion whence it came and in which it lives. Now in seeking to show the possibility of the finite self's attaining to a direct and immediate experience of the Perfect without dissolution of its finitude, we shall have to proceed by regarding the evolutionary process from both these points of view. We shall first regard it *obversely*, *i.e.* as the work of a divine Artist expressing and revealing therein his absolute perfection. And then we shall regard it *reversely*, so to speak, *i.e.* as the self-transcendency of the finite in its efforts and movements towards its consummation in an experience, wherein that Perfection, which is the source and eternal ground of the whole process, is directly apprehended in immediate feeling.

SECTION B. *The Absolute a Divine Creative Artist*

Let us proceed now to consider somewhat more fully the view of creation which regards it as the product of a divine and perfect Artist. In the first place it stands in

marked contrast to the purely mechanical or external view of God that regards Him as an almighty Architect, building up the universe with materials upon which He operates from without in accordance with a preconceived ideal plan. But it also rejects certain Gnostic views of the divine immanence, which still find favour in some quarters. For instance, in an article in *The Quest* for January 1912, the writer, referring to the Mystery sects that abounded all round the Mediterranean in the first century of the Christian era, says, "The life of God was emptied or poured out, in order that the world could exist. God is perpetually sacrificing Himself within his own universe. Creation is the primal and continual self-manifestation of Deity. God is the imprisoned essence of all that exists. He is immanent in all and as a consequence must suffer in all. The manifested world is the perpetual Calvary of Deity. He crucified Himself when He willed to become a Creator." Now this idea of Creation as a kenosis, a divine self-emptying, an imprisonment, even a self-crucifixion on the part of the Deity, the view we are now considering emphatically rejects. It is much too crude, too completely human and self-contradictory, to be a possible interpretation of the mystery of creation. To the vision of no great poet, we are sure, could the process of creation ever reveal itself as such an activity of Deity as this. So far from crucifying Himself, God in His perpetual act of creation, which we must hold to be essential to His very being, ever, as Browning with the insight of true genius says, renews His ancient *rapture*. No musician, at any rate, regarded himself as emptying, imprisoning, or crucifying himself, when with fire of holy enthusiasm he produced his noblest work. There is abundant scope surely for the doctrine of the Cross without making its dread anguish fundamental to creation and as eternal as God Himself. The ultimate truth of this universe, to whose beauty and glory the poet responds with such "deep power of joy," is, we may confidently

believe, not pain, misery, despair, but ineffable and perfect bliss ; and the life of God to which religion seeks to rise is not anguish but beatitude. Creative activity, which is necessarily of the very essence of God, seems, when regarded as an art, to harmonize far more with the view of Reality derived from philosophy, poetry, and as we shall further see from religious experience itself, than does this crude gnostic one with its radical pessimism ; a view which seems rather to reflect the temporary misery, cruelty, and oppression of the age that gave it birth, than to be the result of genuine philosophic poetic or religious insight. Let us then turn to consider the profounder view of the universe which regards it as the manifestation of the productive activity of a divine and perfect Artist. It will enhance the interest of our exposition if we adduce two representative thinkers, one belonging to the past and the other to the present time, both of them possessed of real metaphysical genius of the intuitive order, who, with conspicuous emphasis and perspicacity, have promulgated this view of the relation of the Absolute Spirit to the created universe. From the past, then, we select Bruno, and as contemporary representative of this view we select Mr Edward Carpenter.

Three and a half centuries ago Giordano Bruno, born in the town of Nola in Italy, who subsequently became famous as the heroic monk, philosopher, and martyr of the Roman Church, with that illumination that only visits minds of the very highest order, represented the First Principle of all things, the Ultimate Reality in our modern phraseology, or the Universal Spirit, as an inner artist of infinite productiveness and plastic power. He drew the distinction between the human and the divine artist, however, that whereas the human artist works from without to communicate his thought to materials taken from nature, and which, therefore, have an existence and qualities of their own, quite irrespective of the purpose of his art, the divine artist has no such external

independent pre-existing materials on which to work. In other words, God or the Absolute Spirit is the true inner formative power of the universe, its active, spiritual, creative Force or Soul. Matter is eternal ; it constitutes the negative resisting yet receptive element or medium in relation to which the active positive creative power can act and reveal itself. But both positive and negative elements are contained within the fundamental unity of the Absolute's perfect being. It will be seen, therefore, that Bruno clearly discerned this eternal duality, or polarity, as it has subsequently been termed, with its positive and negative aspects, to be essential to the perfection and creative activity of the Absolute. " Birth, growth, and the perfection of all we see is," he said, " from opposites, through opposites, and in opposites ; and where there is opposition, there is action and reaction, there is motion, variety, with its grades and succession." ¹ And so the thought or design at work in creation is not a mere mechanical cunning acting from without, shaping and adjusting matter according to an ingenious plan, which is foreign to it. On the contrary, in the universe the ideal principle or formative power, he says, is present from the beginning, inspiring the first minutest atom of the structure with the power of the perfect whole that is to be. Thus the universe contains in itself the principle of its own being ; and even the least and most insignificant of finite things presupposes by its very existence the presence and activity within it of that which is to be realized ; and so this first principle is at once the beginning and end of all. Such is Bruno's brilliant exposition of the relation of the Universal Spirit regarded as a divine and perfect artist, to the universe regarded as the product of his art.

But, as a corollary to the foregoing exposition, Bruno sees clearly that in God Freedom and Necessity are one.

¹ Quoted by Mrs Annie Besant. Lecture on Bruno, in the Sorbonne, Paris, 1911, p. 12.

There is no external compulsion laid upon him and therefore he is free ; and yet the universe arises of necessity out of the perfection of the divine nature of which it is the expression ; since of that perfection creative activity is an essential element. Again, as it is incompatible with the perfect nature of God that he should refrain from creating, equally so is it that he should create only a finite universe ; and so the Infinite All, Bruno says, contains within itself an endless multitude of worlds, each complete in its kind. Looked at in the light of the whole, therefore, nothing is or can be really intrinsically evil ; in certain relations it may appear so, but what appears as evil in one relation may nevertheless be seen to be good in another. The more, therefore, man raises himself to the contemplation of the whole, the more is evil as such seen to disappear. It is not surprising that Principal Caird, from whom this outline of Bruno's thought is in part taken, should say, that had Bruno realized all that is contained in this conception, his philosophy might have gone beyond that of Spinoza, and anticipated much which it was left for later speculative thought to develop.¹

God, then, according to Bruno, is best conceived of as a Divine Genius, who unceasingly gives expression to Himself in new productions, in each of which the perfection of His nature is unfolded, and Who is ever thus self-revealed and self-revealing. Now the work of all great artists is the expression, not strict-speaking of thought, but rather of an immediate feeling of beauty or perfection ; and so the Absolute or Perfect Artist must be conceived of as a Self whose all-inclusive perfection consists in the activity within him of a perfectly harmonious, immediate, and creative experience, of the nature of what we term emotion, an immediate experi-

¹ See J. Caird's "Spinoza," chap. iv., where an excellent summary of Bruno's views is given. Also Erdmann's "History of Philosophy," vol. i. p. 663.

ence that is perpetually exfoliating into all the universes of time and space. Thus conceived of the Absolute is a being whose life or experience is much more complete, much more inclusive, much more concrete, than could be that of any merely abstract thinker, or mechanical contriver, or even than that of any human artist who has to operate on materials having existence and qualities external to himself and irrespective of his art. And yet such an experience is not irrational nor even a-logical, as has sometimes been affirmed.¹ Rather, to use the technical phraseology of Mr Mark Baldwin, in the supreme emotions of art do the strands of thought and feeling, that in our self-conscious life have divided, once more unite in a hyper-logical and æsthetic immediacy, in which reason acts so to speak within the emotion, as logic does in language. Thought or reason pervades the emotion as an essential constituent, as a controlling and creative activity, giving the emotion its elevation and distinctive value. Again in such a view of the relation of the Absolute Spirit to the world, evil, necessarily, is no longer an entity or power external and hostile to God, and therefore something to be defeated and destroyed, as in dualistic philosophical and theological systems. On the contrary, rather is it a discrepant element within the being and nature of the Absolute, and existing there to be overcome, not, however, by being destroyed, but by being transmuted, by being made contributory to a higher harmony like discords in music, and so converted into a medium for the fuller disclosure of the Absolute's Perfection. Surely we have here a far worthier view of the relation of the Divine Spirit to the evil of the world than the popular dualistic one to which we have been accustomed.

If then we would obtain an approximately true conception of the Absolute's perfect immediate experience and of its creative activity, we must, according to Bruno,

¹ See Belford Bax, "The Roots of Reality," *passim*.

seek it where the aspect or element of immediacy is most highly developed in human nature. That is to say, we must have recourse to the transcendental but concrete experience exhibited by the highest forms of genius in creative art.

And now let us turn to Mr Edward Carpenter for a modern exposition of this view of the universe. In an essay written many years ago Mr Carpenter upheld and strenuously defended the neo-Lamarckian or vitalistic view of evolution which is now coming into increasing prominence and finding much acceptance in the world of science through the labours of Bergson, Driesch, and others, and which maintains that function is not originally the result of organism, but that organism is the result of function. Taking as a text that very significant phrase from Walt Whitman which we have already quoted, namely, "Creation's incessant unrest, exfoliation," Mr Carpenter wrote the essay above referred to, bearing as its title the last word in this phrase from Whitman—"*Exfoliation.*" This essay he has since expanded into his book, "The Art of Creation." This latter work, though somewhat popularly written, yet shows, in our judgment, even by its very title, far profounder insight into the true nature of the creative principle at work in the universe than anything we have yet had from the more brilliant pen of M. Bergson. He not only maintained the vitalistic interpretation of organic life and of the whole evolutionary process, as against the fashionable materialism of the time represented by Huxley, Haeckel, and others; but in his more recent "Art of Creation," as well as in other writings, he has shown intuitive metaphysical genius of the same high order as that of Bruno in the sixteenth century, and as that which we find already disclosed so long ago in India by the authors of the Vedanta. Indeed from this last-named fountain of religious philosophy it is evident Mr Carpenter has drunk deeply. We do not, therefore, hesitate to avail ourselves of the interpreta-

tion of the creative process which his special poetical and metaphysical insight has enabled him to offer us, rather than appeal to thinkers, for whom, though of greater repute in the sphere of philosophy strictly so called, yet nevertheless it cannot be claimed that they have seen with such penetrative intuition into the very life of things.

Taking us, then, in the first instance to biology, Mr Carpenter interprets the life even of the single cell and its inner activities in the light of his profound metaphysical insight into the nature of the Ultimate Reality, gained evidently, as we have said, in part from his acquaintance with Walt Whitman, but still more from his studies in the Vedanta philosophy of India. Respecting the relation of the Absolute Spirit to the created universe, this ancient eastern philosophy expresses itself in a manner that is in exact accord with the view taken long afterwards by Bruno and others in the west. The universe, it says, is the expression of the Soul of the universe, just as a work of art is the expression and embodiment of the soul of the artist. Indeed, they are essentially one. For the creative principle which we discern to be at work in the universe at large, is the very same principle which reveals itself, though on a limited scale, in the inspired genius of the human artist. And, therefore, we can, in no mere metaphorical language but with literal truth, attribute experience of precisely the same nature to the Absolute Artist as we discover in the human. The scale is certainly different but the creative principle is identical. The Vedanta, therefore, in speaking of the Absolute can use such words as these, "He, the great poet, the ancient poet, the whole universe is his poem, coming in verses, rhythms and rhymes, written in infinite bliss."¹ The Vedanta thinkers, therefore, having attained so profound an

¹Quoted from a collection of Lectures and Addresses by Swami Vivikananda, p. 112.

insight into the real nature of creative activity, necessarily did not perceive any contradiction or incongruity in attributing such activity to the Absolute. And herein they show marked superiority over much of our drier, less poetic, and more abstract Western philosophy. The Vedanta, moreover, avoids the crude gnostic error alluded to above. As with Browning, so with the Vedanta, God is ever in creation renewing his ancient rapture. Creation, it says, is a poem written in infinite bliss. It is, accordingly, this conception of the Absolute's life and nature which Mr Carpenter brings to his exposition of the inner and profounder significance of biological facts. The ego, the self, of each cell is for him implicitly the whole undivided Absolute; and the process of evolution from beginning to end is the exfoliation of the Absolute Self under conditions of time and space, in other words creation is a work of art.

But here again the question naturally arises: Why if the Absolute be thus immanent with all its fulness within each cell, each insect, each mollusc, within each of all the numerous hosts of finite centres or selves in nature, do they not all go on to perfection? Why, if the Perfect Artist is immanent and at work in each, the perpetual arrest of development we see everywhere; an arrest that meets us moreover not only at the many stages represented by the various animal and vegetable species of the past and present below man, but apparently in the lower races of mankind as well? Life seems to reach in countless directions what science terms "*fixity of type*," as though it had endeavoured by various ways to reach its end; but finding no thoroughfare, had been forced to try other routes." The study of biology suggests indeed that life had found itself in a sort of labyrinth, and has taken all these millions of ages, after innumerable fruitless efforts, to find its way out in man. The whole course of life's

evolutionary history seems strewn with failures, with monstrous forms, apparent fiascos of the *élan vital* in its attempt to reach its far-off goal. When we turn over a modern book of geological science we can hardly fail at first sight to be repelled by the many ugly and fantastic forms, still more by the perpetual evidences of unmitigated ferocity, which we meet with as we plod our way on through all the weary ages till we arrive at man. It seems, indeed, as though the *élan vital* did not know at first which way to take to reach its destination, and tried sometimes to get there by producing these hideous revolting forms with nothing to recommend them but their sheer brutal strength and enormous size. Was all this, we ask, really necessary and inevitable? Was no neater, no gentler, no cleaner way conceivable by which to arrive at Man? And even when man at last appears still what failures apparently of races and individuals! How few members even of the human race, after all these millions of ages, during which life has been trying its "prentice hand," seem really worth the trouble and the effort expended in producing them! How few philosophers, poets, artists, mystics and saints! Some such pessimistic reflections one can hardly avoid when studying geological and biological science. But in the light of the metaphysical interpretation of life suggested by Bruno, Walt Whitman, Carpenter and others, that the creative process, being likened to a work of art, the value of the process does not lie merely in what comes out at the close, as in mechanical contrivances, but in the whole movement from beginning to end; in the light of this higher illumination we can, in some measure at least, see that not one cell, not one self, however minute, however apparently trivial, nay however even alien and repulsive it may seem to us, is without its part to play in the scope and meaning of the perfect whole, as each note of the apparently least important instrument in

an orchestra is needed to the full expression of the genius of the great composer. Whether all selves even in unicellular organisms are eternal differentiations of the Absolute, and therefore destined at length in ways beyond our comprehension to attain perfection, though for the most part their existence appears so fleeting, we must here leave unsolved. It is sufficient to say at this point that each for so long as it exists is needed, that not one is excluded from exercising some function in relation to the great whole. Further than this we may be unable at present to go, and with becoming humility may confess our ignorance. If, however, anyone should still feel himself oppressed with the thought of the countless millions of selves which we must believe have existed from the beginning, which exist now, and the innumerable hosts we must suppose are yet to exist before the story of life on the earth draws to its inevitable close, we may refer him to the still vaster number of atoms, electrons, or whatever he may suppose to be the elementary units that constitute the universe of matter, each of which must be conceived of as necessary and to have infinite relations by which it passes beyond itself and becomes implicated in the meaning, the beauty, and splendour of the whole. Or better, let him turn again to the late Prof. Wm. James and see in how suggestive a way he deals with this difficulty in his Ingersoll Lecture on Immortality already referred to, where he rightly reminds us, as we have seen, that if the interminable number of individual lives overwhelms our poor human imagination, and *we* have no use for them, yet each has its own special *internal* significance and value for that Absolute Spirit who not only includes, but expresses himself through them all. After this brief reference once more to this very natural difficulty our discussion suggests, let us return to Mr Carpenter's "Art of Creation."

Nothing in the evolution of life is more surprising,

nothing more indicative of an immanent intent, conation or purpose, than the transition that has taken place from the unicellular to the "colonial" forms known as metazoa, with the accompanying emergence of a higher and more inclusive self. The single cells still retain their distinct identity, but are included somehow within the larger life of this higher self, and exercise their respective functions in its interest. This is also true of the different organs of these multiplex forms. In truth the self of a so-called "*colonial organism*" seems a type of that supreme Absolute Self which includes us all. The Absolute, indeed, seems, so to speak, to cast its shadowy outline upon life at every stage of its evolution. "How came the Great Self also to be millions of selves?" asks Mr Carpenter, and replies by asking the further question, "How can the self of the human body also be millions of selves in its component cells?" For modern science, as he justly says, tends more and more to attribute self-ness and intelligence to each cell, and to establish intimate relations between the self of the whole body and the selves of those countless cells that form its constituent elements. Again, taking an analogy from our every day experience, he asks, how a man can be one self in his office and another at his club and another in his domestic circle, and yet preserve his identity amid all these different appearances?¹ How again is it that plants and low animals multiply by fission? Do the selves multiply? Or, can one self have many expressions? And he concludes from these suggestive questions that there is no contradiction, no impossibility, in one self becoming many selves, or having many selves affiliated to it. And so in the case of the Great Self of the universe, it also may differentiate itself into countless

¹ See this appearance of the one self as also many selves illustrated by Wm. James, "Varieties of Religious Experience," chap. viii., "The Divided Self," also p. 193.

selves, aspects, or modes, and this may be the condition of its more perfect self-expression. If this be granted then each self must *be* potentially the whole, and in a sense must be commensurate with the whole; so that even in the ego of a single cell, the Absolute Self, being thus implicitly present, there is potential knowledge of the whole universe from that particular point of view. Mr Carpenter thus concludes that there is one all-embracing Spirit or Self, and that every finite self, even to the ego of the microscopic cell, is identical with, *is*, in truth, the Perfect Self; it is the Perfect Self only in finite form and under finite conditions. Now, whether one accepts entirely the above interpretation of the intimate nature of cells, their multiplication and development, just as Mr Carpenter presents it or not, and for our part we think his treatment both cogent and illuminating, at least we may say it helps us to see that there is nothing contrary to experience, nothing contradictory, nothing inherently absurd, in ascribing to the Absolute that creative activity whereby it exfoliates into countless numbers of finite selves whilst still retaining its own undivided unity.

Each self, then, is the appearance of the Absolute, indeed, *is* the Absolute under particular limitations of time and space. The full significance of this position will appear presently. Meanwhile it is important to obtain, if we can, some confirmation of these views, and in seeking such confirmation we find once more that our chief help comes from the profounder insight into human nature attained by modern psychology and especially as expounded by Wm. James. Again, then, we turn to him, protagonist of pluralism though he be, for special help in our attempt to form a concrete conception of the Absolute.

In our first chapter, the reader will remember, we found Wm. James, in spite of all his pluralistic protestations, obliged to postulate the reality of an absolute

Perfection when he came to interpret the higher forms of religious experience. And then, in his really wonderful little book, "Human Immortality," he again lapses, as we saw, into the abhorred absolutist philosophy. In this book he becomes particularly explicit and unambiguous in his avowal of absolutism, defining finite beings in the terms of that philosophy as "diversified channels of expression" through which the Eternal Spirit of the universe affirms and realizes its own infinite life.¹ And now once more we are able to have recourse to his authority in support of the metaphysical views outlined above.

In his work, entitled "A Pluralistic Universe," James gives us an interesting and graphic account, it will be remembered, of the metaphysical views of Fechner. Whilst repudiating Fechner's absolutist conclusion as superfluous, as but an unnecessary appendage to his general theory of life and consciousness, though indeed it is the inevitable outcome of his general principles and method, James nevertheless accepts Fechner's view that living individuals, human selves included, are not separate and independent entities, but are contained as factors or component elements within a larger self. But this is, of course, a distinctly monistic hypothesis. James, agreeing with Fechner, in this connection quite explicitly abandons the pluralistic view of the externality of God, though he contended for it in his earlier Pragmatism.² Now, however, God is no longer simply our companion, our co-worker and co-helper, *Primus inter pares*, but an inclusive, if not an all-inclusive, Spirit in whom we live and move and have our being. Manifestly an entirely different and incompatible conception.

Now, Fechner held that the relation of God to ourselves should be conceived of after the analogy of the

¹ "Human Immortality," p. 82.

² "Pragmatism," pp. 298, 300.

relation of our own mind to the totality and variety of all its functions, of all its activities and states of consciousness. The creative activity of God consists, Fechner taught, not in acting on what is outside him, but in instituting differences *within* himself. Creation is, therefore, a continuous self-manifestation of God, who thereby brings to appearance the quality or nature of his own inner being. The world is thus the objective self-appearance or expression of the Deity. As regards the existence of evil, that also is nothing independent and real external to him, but the ground or negative principle within the reality of God, against which the power and activity of his higher will sets itself to strive, and so "to remove it and heal it and turn it to good." To this will of God to resolve the disharmonious to concord there corresponds in the Divine Experience the feeling of the harmony of the whole, or what is termed the Blessedness of God. God is always sure of his end, he said, just as is a perfect artist whose feeling of the perfection of the whole, with the joy that is an element in that feeling, accompanies the entire process of his creative activity or self-expression. Nevertheless this blessedness, this perfect joy, does not preclude the Deity from experiencing all the lower unhappinesses, which he feels in and with man and all other sensitive creatures, who are every one included in his being; any more than a musician because of his joy in the perfection of the whole symphony, is thereby precluded from experiencing the discords also, since these discords are elementary constituents essential, each in its place, to the perfection of the whole. Thus the sufferings of all finite existences are felt elements in the divine life, though the divine life, in its experience of evil, differs from ours in that God "fore-feels," so to say, "the turning, the solution, the reaction into happiness" at every stage. Thus, Fechner teaches, unhappiness in God is but a moment which is overcome; which, there-

fore, never interferes with his unity with himself as a perfect whole, but is taken up and resolved in the Absolute Harmony.¹

Now it will be evident from the above digest of Fechner's philosophy that he is a thinker cast in precisely the same mould as the authors of the Upanishads, and particularly as Bruno, who long before taught that our sense of evil was due to our fixing our gaze on fragments of the whole and so losing sight of the all-pervading goodness, just as he who looks only at a small corner of a fine edifice misses the beauty, the symmetry, the harmony of the complete structure. Fechner, therefore, like Bruno, is an absolutist. That he should have felt the fascination of Fechner is a fresh proof, in our judgment, of a certain, irrepressible, monistic strain in James, that often puts itself in evidence in his works. In expounding Fechner, then, James goes with him in his view of God as a Spirit who is not external to finite egos or selves like the God of popular theology, but who includes them within his wider life ; though, as we have pointed out, James pulls up almost suddenly, and certainly without any sufficient reason, at Fechner's inevitable monistic conclusion. But he has, as we have intimated, the advantage of Fechner in being able to bring to the elucidation and support of this view of the inclusiveness of the divine life, the results of the most recent psychological research, many of which point so manifestly in the direction of a monistic explanation of finite experience. It will be worth our while, then, to hear his remarkable endorsement of Fechner.

In ourselves, James reminds us, visual consciousness goes with our eyes, and tactual consciousness goes with our skin ; nevertheless, although neither the visual consciousness nor the tactual knows the other, they both come together and figure in relation and combination in the more inclusive consciousness which each

¹ See "Philosophy of Religion," by Pfeleiderer, vol. ii. pp. 294, 295.

of us names his *self*. And he goes on to say, "Quite similarly then we must suppose that my consciousness of myself and yours of yourself, although in their immediacy they keep separate and know nothing of each other, are yet known and used together in a higher consciousness, say in that of the human race, in which they enter as constituent parts. Similarly, the whole human and animal kingdom come together as constituents of a consciousness of a still wider scope," and so on till, according to Fechner's conclusion, which, as we have said, is inevitable, but at which James stops short, we at last arrive at the one, all-embracing, absolute consciousness of God himself.¹ Again, in the same volume, in writing of the continuity of all experience he says, "What we conceptually identify ourselves with and say we are thinking of at any time is the centre; but our *full* self is the whole field with all those indefinitely radiating, subconscious possibilities of increase that we can only feel without conceiving and can hardly begin to analyse. . . . Every bit of us at every moment is part and parcel of a wider self, it quivers along various radii like the wind-rose of a compass, and the actual in it is continuously one with possibilities not yet in our present sight. And just as we are co-conscious with our own momentary margin, may not we ourselves form the margin of some more really central self in things which is co-conscious with the whole of us? May not you and I be confluent in a higher consciousness and confluent active there though we now know it not?"² Wm. James having thus laid as a psychologist in this brilliant, satisfactory, and, we think, successful fashion the monistic foundation of our self-transcendancy, applies his principle of "co-consciousness" to the interpretation of the higher experiences of religion. "The believer," he says, "finds that the tenderer parts of his personal life are continuous with

¹ "Pluralistic Universe," p. 155.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 289, 290.

a *more* of the same quality which is operative in the universe outside of him and which he can keep in working touch with, and in a fashion get on board of and save himself when all his lower being has gone to pieces in the wreck. In a word, the believer is continuous to his own consciousness, at any rate, with a wider self from which saving experiences flow in."¹ No Absolutist could surely desire anything better, anything more substantial in confirmation of his faith, and coming from such a source the testimony is of inestimable value. Quite naturally, therefore, having thus expounded the relation of the finite to a wider and more inclusive Self, James expresses his surprise that the philosophers of the Absolute should have shown so little interest in this department of experience and so seldom put its phenomena in evidence.² With so penetrating a psychological intuition into the nature of our finite consciousness, and so clear a discernment of its relation to a deeper, wider, more inclusive experience, it is but natural that James with characteristic frankness should offer us another valuable metaphysical concession. "The Absolute," he acknowledges, "is not the impossible being I once thought it."³

We have, so we trust, now found sufficient justification for our belief that there is one eternal, absolute Perfection; and that this Perfection is to be regarded, not as a vast shoreless sea of indefinite life, but as an all-inclusive Self. This absolute Self is reflected in the microcosm of even the simplest, most primitive living cell; and it is by reason of the immanence of the Perfect in the self of each cell that the creative evolutionary process has taken place and is still advancing. This immanent presence of the Perfect is thus the one sufficient ground and metaphysical explanation of what is known to science as evolution, and there is no other either possible or conceivable. Each self, then, whether

¹ "Pluralistic Universe," p. 307. ² *Ibid.*, p. 308. ³ *Ibid.*, p. 292.

of a single cell or of man, is the Absolute Self implicit there under particular unique conditions of time and place. Having in this way established, sufficiently, we trust, for our present purpose, the significance of the evolutionary process, contemplated on its obverse side, so to speak—i.e. *sub specie æternitatis*—we may now conclude the present chapter by considering it on its reverse side as the finite's ascent to the Perfect. We will seek to trace, of course in very meagre outline, the stages of the process whereby the finite self ascends from mere sense experience to the direct apprehension in immediate feeling of the perfection of the absolute Self, that absolute Self of whose perfect immediacy, as we have said, the whole universe of matter and mind is the expression or exfoliation. In this way it is our hope to accomplish the task we set ourselves at the beginning of our whole inquiry, namely, of showing how it is possible for the finite to experience the Perfect without thereby incurring the dissolution of its finitude.

SECTION C. *The Finite's Ascent to the Perfect*

We will proceed then with our endeavour to indicate how the self-transcendency of the finite is possible whilst still retaining its finitude, *i.e.* its negative relation towards the extended or natural world on the one hand, and towards the rest of the world of finite selves on the other. This negativity quite evidently is an essential feature of finite personal existence, and so of immortality; since, were it dissolved, there would inevitably be extinction of the finite, *i.e.* it would be absorbed once more into the Infinite Life, of which it would thus have been only a fleeting expression.

And first let us once more consider for a moment what it is we mean when we say we perceive or know anything. Let it be some material object in space. We have already

seen that such knowledge is in no inconsiderable degree dependent on the nature of the self that knows. What we say we know or perceive is not the object in itself, *i.e.* as it is independent of our knowledge of it. On the contrary, the object in our knowledge or as we know it is a construction, resulting from our reaction upon external reality; and the constituents of our knowledge are elements of our consciousness evoked by external reality's influence upon us. Sensations, the forms of space and time, the causal relation, and all the other categories implicated in the construction of the object of knowledge, are contributed by the self, they are the self's mode of responding to reality's external appeal. No doubt external reality has a nature, a structure, a life of its own. But our knowledge of it is not absolute; is not of "the thing in itself"; that is to say, is not an acquaintance with it as it is in its own independent existence, but a knowledge of it only through its relation to us, only as it affects us. This, then, is what is meant by the relativity of knowledge. The sensations we experience under reality's external stimulation and control, the categories or forms of thought under which we grasp and hold it, are not, however, arbitrary contributions on our part, or what we call our knowledge of it would be no true knowledge at all; but are determined by its nature and the special character of its effects upon us. We do not, therefore, make of outward reality just what we like, we do not cut and carve and relate it according to our own preconceived ideas to suit our human wants and necessities, as Humanists and Pragmatists have sometimes vainly and fantastically imagined.¹ What we make of it is due to the co-operation of what Mr Mark Baldwin terms external and internal control,² that is, to the dual contribution of its own nature

¹ See, for example, Wm. James's "Varieties of Religious Experience," p. 438, note; and Schiller in "Personal Idealism," p. 60, quoted by James in his "Pragmatism," p. 243.

² "Thought and Things," vol. i.

and our response. So much we take it is clear. Now sensations or the subjective elements of knowledge are really, as we have already shown, disclosures or revelations of the intrinsic nature of the self; and its unity or identity, *i.e.* its transcendental character, is also revealed at each stage of its advancing knowledge, ever vaster meanings rolling up from beneath or descending from above. Let us take a few more illustrations.

It requires but little reflection to discover, in the first place, that our past experience, our own personal and private experience, predisposes our mind as regards its future modes of apprehending objective reality. The simplest observation of things involves antecedent mental conditions or predispositions, which we indicate by saying we do or we do not know *what* to look for. There is, for example, a familiar sort of puzzle-picture in which we are told to find the cat in the grass or the wood-cock in the autumn leaves. It is hard to trace these forms in the picture till the precise image of what we want to see is already in the mind, and then how easy! Having once caught the form, the difficulty is afterwards to revert to our original position and *not* to see it. Similarly the townsman walking along the high-road fails to detect the hare quietly watching him from the farther end of a field, whereas the country-man walking by his side notices it instantly. Again, the sky contains really a mass of irregularly distributed stars, but to the mind of the astronomer they are broken up into numerous well-known constellations. These and other illustrations indicate, says Mr Carpenter, how the mind *contributes* to what it sees. There is some way of looking at things, some predisposition, some preconception, already at work in all cases which determines or helps to determine what we see and how we see it.¹

And now let us take another step. How is it that the millions of taps on the retina of the eye are apprehended

¹ "Art of Creation," pp. 65, 66.

by us as the beautiful colour blue? Is each of them represented on the psychical side of our nature, if not in our surface consciousness, then in what we call our sub-consciousness? We cannot exactly tell. It may be so; most likely it is so. Still this is a subject open to dispute. The colour itself seems to introspection, at any rate, as simple, as little compounded, as anything could well be. Then, again, all the seven prismatic colours may be synthetically apprehended as a single beam in an apparently simple sensation of white light. There is manifestly, then, a *tendency* of the self in reacting on the manifold of sense to reduce it to the unity of its own nature, *i.e.* to apperceive the many as one. Turning now to the sense of hearing, this same tendency is still further and more indisputably in evidence. For instance, "The fairy C sharp," as Mr Carpenter calls it, is objectively represented by hundreds of taps on the drum of the ear, and without this synthetic unity of apperception they would be heard merely as a series of discrete noises. Again, in a musical piece separate but co-existing notes are apprehended as harmony, and others in succession as melody, and in both harmony and melody there is manifestly something more than there is in the notes themselves regarded in their discreteness. Moreover, in this case not only the unity, but the plurality also is distinctly in our surface consciousness, and the process of synthetic apperception is therefore open to direct introspection. In both melody and harmony, then, there is a distinct feeling or immediate apprehension of the notes, not to be confounded with the discrete notes themselves, whereby they are reduced to the unity of the self; or we might express it otherwise by saying the self here imposes its own nature on the manifold of sense. But, finally, the whole series and co-existences of notes, chords, and musical phrases is synthetically apprehended under the form of the emotion which controls and pervades the whole, constituting what we call the symphony, the sonata, or whatever it may be. On

looking at the whole composition from the other, what we have called the *obverse* side, we may say that the one creative emotion or immediate feeling of the great composer exfoliates itself into all these series and co-existences of sounds which thus become the expression and revelation of his genius.

There are, then, as we have seen already, two contrasted attitudes towards any great work of musical genius, namely, the *reverse* and the *obverse*, the one that of the listener, and the other that of the original composer. In the former case the manifold of sense experience *evokes* the appropriate unity of feeling under which, though manifold, it may be synthetically apprehended; and in the latter case the emotional unity exfoliates into the manifold of sense, which manifold thus becomes its revelation or expression of itself. In the first case we have what we call appreciative activity; in the second we have creative. In the first case we are inductive, we ascend from the many to the one; and this is what the audience has to do when listening, for the first time at all events, to the orchestral rendering of a musical masterpiece. In the second case the process is deductive, *i.e.* the one, as we say, exfoliates itself into the many, and this is what we mean by creation strictly so-called whether it be human or divine. The universe might then appropriately be compared to an infinitely grand orchestral performance, the creative genius of which is God, and the finite self to a listener and performer in one. The evolutionary process in which he plays his part may be said to be an education also, a progressive discipline, by which the finite is trained to an appreciation of the genius of the Absolute. The goal, the mystic goal, religion strives after, will thus be the attainment of this power of appreciation, the ability to enter by immediate experience into the joy or rapture of the creative genius of the Absolute Perfection. The first steps in this direction are represented by the processes we have just described. We already

transcend, as we have seen, the discreteness of the sense manifold in various ways by these immediate and apparently simple feelings, under which the discrete are synthetically apprehended and reduced to the unity of the self.

And here it may be suitable to interpolate that the above psychological facts seem conclusive evidence that the self is fundamentally one and identical. Were it originally no more than a plurality of pre-existing elements, call them ideas, thoughts, "psychic dust," or what not, that somehow managed to get themselves compounded together by a sort of mental chemistry, or were the self but a flux or stream of consciousness, then the synthetic processes above described, and still more those yet to be considered, would manifestly be inconceivable. In these apparently simple feelings or immediacies the ego reveals at every turn its own fundamental nature as the one in the many. In the senses of sight and sound this synthetic principle can be seen clearly at work, but this tendency or effort of the self to apprehend the variety and multiplicity of its experience under the synthetic form of an apparently simple or immediate feeling is not confined to sense. Indeed the tendency seems primary and fundamental, active alike in every department of experience.

The same principle of apprehending a manifold content of consciousness in the immediacy of an apparently simple feeling, is, for example, still further illustrated in what we call our instincts or intuitions. We cannot here go into the question of the extraordinary instinctive knowledge exhibited by lower animals, some of which are referred to by M. Bergson in his "Creative Evolution." But every one knows what it is to *feel* quite certain of the truth of something though he cannot possibly state the reason why. Yet, were he able to do so, he would not be adding something extraneous and foreign to the feeling of conviction, but only exfoliating it into its details. Otherwise the details would be irrelevant. We may in such a case

be correctly said to apprehend a rational process under the form of an immediate experience. As an example, we may cite the case of Sir Isaac Newton, who had no need, we are told, to go through the detailed proof of the theorems and propositions of Euclid's elements, but immediately, on simply reading these theorems and propositions, or hearing them stated, saw or felt their truth. Hence such feelings are not correctly said to be irrational or alogical, nor are they, strictly speaking, supra-rational. In truth their capacity of being exfoliated into rational process is the test and evidence of their validity. It is therefore a serious psychological error, as we have already intimated, to regard the logical as quite outside immediate feeling, and to treat all immediacy by contrast as the purely alogical factor of consciousness.¹ When thought and immediacy are thus cleft in twain and made to stand only in external relation to each other, we have as a result the modern fashion of belauding bare feeling and crying down the intellect, so that in the end we are left without any criterion of value wherewith to discriminate amongst our various immediate feelings ; and why one should not be as good as another no one can possibly tell in this absence of any rational test. Once more, then, let us not forget that there is a real or genetic logic, as well as the purely abstract or discursive logic of the logician ; and that it is this real or genetic logic that is immanent in all true feelings and *makes* them true, and by reason of which they are capable of being exfoliated into rational process of thought or into rational conduct in practical life. When, to take another illustration, "calculating boys" like Bidder and Gauss, to whom the conclusion of an intricate mathematical problem comes all at once, and they *feel* the answer and know it to be true without working it out, this *feeling* of the truth is far more than *bare* feeling. It would, we hold, be a libel to call it alogical. Moreover, to recognize all that such an

¹ As does Mr Belford Bax. See "Roots of Reality," pp. 86, 87.

experience really signifies is, we believe, to grasp the key to the interpretation of the highest experience of religion, as we are presently to see, as also of the creative process in the universe at large.

For these intuitive immediacies are indeed innumerable, in art, in ethics, and in practical efficiency, as well as in religion. We sometimes know what is morally right in conduct, or what is appropriate in behaviour, without being able to exfoliate the reasons in detail; and so this "synthetic unity of apperception," to use once more the cumbrous but well-known phraseology of Kant, has a great variety of application and illustration. It functions, as we are now to see, in the form in which each of us apprehends and appropriates the experience of his ancestors; and it functions finally in the highest immediacies of all, that immediate experience, or those immediate experiences (for they are of almost exhaustless variety in tone and colouring), whereby we apprehend the Perfect. It is by means of these supreme divine experiences that the self enjoys immediate sense of union, or rather identity, with that Absolute Life, which exfoliates its perfection into all the manifold universes of infinite time and space. It is to these high immediacies, these pure exalted emotions, indeed, that all noble art and poetry, as well as religion, seek to raise us. To these great immediacies the poet Wordsworth referred in that single sentence, previously quoted, which seems to us to contain as in a nutshell the whole philosophy of mysticism, namely, "Passion, which is highest *reason* in a soul sublime."¹ Indeed the whole cosmos may with truth be defined as the exfoliation of a divine passion supremely rational. But as to the possibility of our entrance as finite selves into so great an experience we have now further to inquire. The self, we have pointed out, transcends itself in idea; all finite experiences, everywhere and

¹ "Prelude," bk. v.

always, transcend themselves ideally, become relational in numberless ways; but we equally transcend our finitude through immediate feeling; and it is this latter form of self-transcendency, as contrasted with the transcendency of ideality or thought, that we will now proceed still further to trace.

We must at this juncture recall to mind our discussion of the question, whether or not acquired characters are inherited. It will be remembered that we found any attempt at a purely physiological or materialistic explanation of heredity proved altogether inadequate, and that the undisputed facts of inheritance could only be explained on the theory of memory—memory of the past stored in some larger and more enveloping consciousness than that of the fleeting members who compose the race. There is, then, a sort of race-memory, and it is in this race-memory we are now to discover the key to the further interpretation of religious experience. And thus the principles discussed and accepted in our former consideration of the questions of the inheritance of acquired characters and racial memory are now to find their sphere of application. We shall also discover by this application of the fore-mentioned principles further justification of our acquiescence in their truth.

Now what is termed race-memory may be taken as a further illustration of the principle of the synthetic unity of apprehension by means of immediate experience. It will be recalled that we drew attention to the two sorts of memory, or rather to the two senses in which the word memory is employed. We said there is memory that retains all the dates, places, order of sequence that belong to the history of the past, and there is the memory that, whilst forgetting these details wholly or in part, yet retains their effects in the form of some habit or disposition. For instance, we may be able to repeat an ode or a tune quite correctly, and we should

be right to say that we remembered it ; and yet we may have entirely forgotten when and where we first heard or read it, and who was present or taught it to us, and how many times, and in what circumstances we have heard it or repeated it since. All these details may have quite escaped us and yet the ability to repeat the tune or the poem we may still retain perfectly. The distinction between these two kinds of memory it is important to keep in view in our further discussion ; since what is true in the case of our personal experiences seems likewise true in the case of what is sometimes called race-memory. " What habit is for individual life that heredity is for racial life," said Prof. Ward.¹ Now we cannot break down the barriers that part finite self from finite self either towards our contemporaries or towards our ancestors, so as actually to possess ourselves of all the details of their personal experiences in such a manner as to make them our own. It is probable, as we have seen, that all the details of the past are, nevertheless, still somehow remembered. No event, however trivial, we may well believe, is ever completely forgotten by the universe, any more than any atom or electron can be thought of as dropping out of existence in the physical world. Each event as it occurs may be said to pass up into eternity and to be still real there as qualifying the individual self whose experience it is. But if, as we have already seen, there is reason to think a larger consciousness exists inclusive of ours, which lives in us each and in all other human selves at the same time, then we may well believe that in this larger self also all these details still live, and might perhaps still continue to live if the subordinate selves should forget them or were even to pass away. But we cannot *be* our ancestors ; we cannot so live in them as to be able to appropriate these details to ourselves and to say we did them or felt them. We read history, but, unless we hold the un-

¹ " Heredity and Memory," p. 52.

proved doctrine of pre-existence and re-incarnation, we cannot say the events recorded of the heroes and heroines who figure in its pages actually happened to us. Nevertheless, we are not separate independent creations, for biology and psychology alike assert the continuity of life and experience. What we can do, without infringing upon their individuality or losing our own, is to appropriate the accumulated result of ancestral experiences. We can, and do, apprehend them in the form of immediate feelings, impulses, conative tendencies, by what we call our temperament, disposition, or emotional character. The memory of them is of the second order mentioned above. We are continually open to emotional influxes from that deeper level, where the past is all stored and living still; and these so-called subliminal uprushes are, some of them at all events, race-feelings, race-memories, race-immediacies. Wm. James in endeavouring to account for certain abnormal or supernormal facts of consciousness found it needful to suppose a superior "co-consciousness," as he termed it. "I doubt," he said, "whether we shall ever understand them without using the very letter of Fechner's conception of a great reservoir in which the memories of earth's inhabitants are pooled and preserved, and from which, when the threshold lowers or the valve opens, information ordinarily shut out leaks into the mind of exceptional individuals among us."¹ But the supposition of such a reservoir is required not only to explain the abnormal or supernormal phenomena to which Wm. James here specially refers, but also, as we saw, to explain the common everyday facts of race-memory, and, indeed, of all heredity; for, as we have said, it is becoming increasingly evident that the phenomena of heredity cannot be physiologically but only psychically interpreted. From these depths within voluminous emotions surge up into our finite centres, emotions or

¹ "Pluralistic Universe," p. 299.

immediate feelings wherein and whereby we enter into and synthetically appropriate the cumulative effect of all the detailed experiences of countless millions of ancestral lives. They are due to race-memory, memory of the second or cumulative kind afore-mentioned. Modern psychology has, therefore, to take account of this form of self-transcendency, a self-transcendency whereby the finite self shows that it is not shut up within the four walls of its private and merely personal experience, but can enter by immediate apprehension into the life of the race.

In this connection we may refer for appropriate illustration to the writings of that remarkable genius, Lafcadio Hearn. In his two wonderful little books, to which Mr Carpenter directs our attention, "Exotics and Retrospectives" and "Out of the East," he gives us some exceedingly interesting and vivid psychological analyses and descriptions of the immediate feelings we are here treating of. He assumes that we inherit the cumulative results of ancestral experience, not only in our affective dispositional nature, but in our perceptual consciousness as well. That is to say, he holds that the cumulative results of countless millions of ancestral perceptions are transmitted to us in the shape of what might be likened to composite photographs, which lie latent in our minds ready to be evoked when strongly appealed to by any kindred or analogous objects that may come in our way. The composite effect of innumerable ancestral perceptions of external forms of beauty and terror are thus stored up, as he thinks, in our physiological nerve centres, but, as we prefer to say, in the memory of some more inclusive consciousness. However, leaving his physiological hypothesis out of account, it will be of value to our present inquiry if we turn for just a moment to his vivid description of these inherited ancestral experiences, that we may learn to appreciate their depth, and the

overwhelming force they sometimes exhibit in our consciousness and exercise over our conduct. In his own fascinating and glowing style Lafcadio Hearn thus paints for us the experience of our earlier loves :

“ When, in the hour of the ripeness of youth, there is perceived some objective comeliness faintly corresponding to certain outlines of the inherited ideal, at once a wave of emotion ancestral bathes the long-darkened image, defines it, illuminates it—and so deludes the senses ; for the sense-reflection of the living objective becomes temporarily blended with the subjective phantasm—with the beautiful luminous ghost made of centillions of memories. Thus to the lover the common suddenly becomes the impossible, because he really perceives blended with it the superindividual and superhuman. He is much too deeply bewitched by that supernatural to be persuaded of his illusion by any reasoning. What conquers his will is not the magic of anything living or tangible, but a charm sinuous and fugitive and light as fire—a spectral snare prepared for him by myriads unthinkable of generations of dead.”¹

In such fashion, then, countless millions of ancestral memories may be awakened and come surging up from those wonderful artesian wells in our nature by which our surface consciousness is connected with the reservoirs of ancestral life, to which James and Fechner direct our attention ; and may act disastrously, swamping and carrying us headlong, destructively, by their resistless force and volume, at some moment when the secret spring has been, perhaps, unexpectedly opened by the touch of a relatively slight and apparently trivial circumstance. In the light of these inherited race experiences, following Mr Carpenter, we shall endeavour to interpret the lower, historic, and more popular forms of religion. And what is still more important, after doing so we shall note the transition from these racial

¹ “ Exotics and Retrospectives,” pp. 202-3.

forms of consciousness to that highest transcendental experience which, as we have said, is the final goal of all religion. Let us then make brief application of these principles, of these facts and experiences, to the interpretation of the religious consciousness.

The different accounts given by Tylor, Spencer, Max Müller, and others of the origin of religion, and of the different divinities it worships, whilst in many respects suggestive, must, as Mr Carpenter remarks, have impressed most students as very partial and inadequate. That popular deities are, as these authors say, sometimes generalizations of natural phenomena, sometimes idealizations of heroic men and women, that the worship of ancestors may have originated in vivid dreams or spectral visions of the departed—all this and much besides may be more or less true. But none of these explanations of religious feeling and of the objects it adores account for the astounding power these divine figures have had over the hearts and lives of their devotees, sometimes extending through ages and ages of history. The current scientific account of the origin of the gods of popular religion comes nowhere near explaining the intense reality attaching to them. No mere generalizations of nature phenomena, no mere personification of heroic men and women, no mere dreams or visions of the dead by living individuals, could possibly account for the profound emotions experienced by generation after generation in the worship of such divinities. The real presence, the activity, and the profound influence of these divine or super-human beings has been asserted and insisted on by millions of people in all races and in all ages. Moreover, belief in their real existence, in their actual presence, and in their power and authority has inspired men to every conceivable devotion, heroism, sacrifice, even to the yielding up of life itself. It is, says Mr Carpenter, impossible to note how intense is the reality with which

the existence of these divine beings has been credited, and not to suppose that they represented some actual dominating forces influencing mankind. What, then, are these great forces? Are they of value in human life, and if so, what is their real function? Or are they influences to be evaded, subdued, and renounced?

The answer to these questions is that the gods, these divine figures, at least the most exalted of them, derive their great, and on the whole beneficent, influence from the fact that they represent the life of the race, they symbolize that deeper and vaster life of which we are the offshoots, and to which we are still affiliated. Through these divinities and the experiences they represent and evoke within us we reach another and more extended order of consciousness; we enter a larger and more inclusive life than that which appertains to us as distinct individuals possessing each a separate organism, and we are correspondingly moved and exalted. The conclusion to which we are thus conducted is that the greater gods, at least, are apparitions or manifestations of the conscious life of the race in the mind of the individual, and that they owe their main significance to that fact. These racial experiences have grown through untold ages, they have gathered strength and volume as time has rolled on. They carry us back through the mental history of the race to our earliest ancestors, human and even pre-human. As impulse, disposition, temperament, or emotion, they live in the selves or finite centres of to-day, re-awakened oftentimes by the figures, images, or other emblems of those gods they have themselves, in the first instance, helped to create, and which now stand as their embodiments and symbols, enduring generation after generation. In this manner the sense of reality attaching to these divinities, and the assurance the worshipper has of their actual presence, of their authority, and of their living influence upon him, can be accounted for. An illusion, no doubt, but one it is difficult and generally quite

impossible by any mere criticism or rational persuasion to remove from his mind. As a rule, only when higher or, at least, other centres of consciousness of like ancestral kind form within the mind does the faith in popular divinities decay and the old order give place to the new.

Now this account of popular historic religions, offered by Mr Carpenter in his "Art of Creation," seems quite intelligible and psychologically sound. That these race feelings do emerge in the consciousness of even highly civilized and cultured minds cannot well be questioned. That they appear especially when we find ourselves in crowds or other large associations of our fellow-men, M. le Bon in his book on "The Crowd" has, we think, sufficiently proved. That they are sometimes baneful and criminal, the history of some of the cruellest deeds perpetrated at times of great popular excitement, such as the French Revolution, demonstrates beyond doubt. When caught in the tide of these powerful race emotions, a person may be impelled to deeds of heroism of which in his individual character he would be quite incapable, as also to the perpetration of crimes from which otherwise he would shrink with horror and detestation. We all, more or less, have experienced how easy it is to be carried away by popular feeling when in crowds—it may be against our calmer and better judgment. The same power may be seen at work in political parties, in religious associations and revivals, and even in social cliques and coteries. Everywhere the influence of these larger social or race emotions may be observed around us. It is equally evident, too, how belief in false and even corrupt causes, as also in effete and exploded superstitions, may persist through association with these strong emotions.

The general psychological fact, then, that race experiences are thus inherited cannot well be disputed. As little can we doubt that such experiences in the case of religion envelop the objects that embody and express them with an intense feeling of reality as with a radiant

atmosphere, producing an immovable faith, not only in their real existence, but in their actual presence to the worshipper who adores them. These are the facts and psychological principles, then, which Mr Carpenter, in a very convincing manner, brings to bear on the interpretation of historic religious faiths and cults.

The evolution of the religious consciousness can well be traced by a critical study of the various deities, together with their characteristic cults, adored by the different races through successive ages. And to-day there is, perhaps, no surer measure of a nation's or individual's rational and spiritual development than that offered by the divinities worshipped, the highest evolution of religion being reached only when, as we are presently to see, all finite, external, objective deities and incarnations of deity are transcended, as it is in the religion of the profoundest metaphysical thinkers, of the noblest poets, and the greatest mystics, where thought and immediate feeling finally blend in a higher consciousness of union with the divine, a consciousness long recognized in India, and now rightly finding its place as subject of investigation in the psychological study of religion in the West. We will then close this chapter by tracing such evolution, necessarily only in briefest and most imperfect outline, and we shall still avail ourselves of the assistance of Mr Edward Carpenter.

Let us take, for example, first, the worship of warrior and athletic gods such as Mars and Hercules. How did these divinities find their way into the Greek pantheon? There is but one answer. Their adoration represented and evoked enormous volumes of hereditary emotion connected with such heroes, the accumulated results of experiences of hope and fear, of triumph and defeat, of fierce joy and ghastly despair, associated with thousands and tens of thousands of ancestral conflicts. And it is not without significance that what was religion to the Greeks of old has dwindled down to popular half-holiday

sport with the Englishman of to-day. Again, no one can witness the tremendous enthusiasm evoked by royalty, apparently out of all proportion to what the occasion or person demands, the actual ascription to the sovereign of divine honours, or at least of divine rights, apart altogether from the worth or merit of the person thus adored, without having forced upon him the conviction that all this popular excitement has its roots deep in race-experience, that outbursts of popular demonstrations of loyalty are the uprising into the consciousness of the present generation, in the form of emotional excitement, of those deep feelings which represent thousands and thousands of occasions when the great king, warrior, and ruler, who played a vastly larger part than royalty does at present both in peace and war, appeared in all the splendour of his kingdom among the people he really governed. In like manner we can account for the devotion anciently paid to the goddess of love, as Venus, Aphrodite, or Ishtar, when we recall how enormous has been the force of sex emotion and the vital part it has played in both human and animal life. And so, almost without end, illustrations could be drawn from the lower cults of the race.

But still higher race-experiences have been thus embodied and objectively represented in divinity and cult. How natural, for example, that the accumulated filial feelings experienced toward fatherhood should be represented by a divinity, the father of gods and men ; and, finally, by the conception of one supreme Author of all being adored as, " Our Father which art in Heaven ! " How inevitable, again, the deification also of motherhood, as Isis, Demeter, or Ceres, and most beautiful and wonderful of all, as the Madonna, virgin mother of the Christ. The babe, too, representing the accumulated and stored-up wealth of parental tenderness, that through untold ages has been lavished upon the helpless new-born infant, human or animal, how natural and inevitable that such

adorable weakness and innocence should also be deified, not only as Horus, but as the infant Jesus, visited by the lowly shepherds of Bethlehem as also by kings and wise men of the East with their gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. How natural, we may exclaim, and inevitable that the human heart should look in the cradle also for its god !

It will be interesting and instructive in illustration of what we have just been saying to quote here a beautifully tender and affecting description of a visit paid to a Madonna shrine after the lapse of forty years, which we recently met with in a weekly newspaper.¹ Who can fail to sympathize with the sense of reality and the deep pathos and religious sincerity that runs through the narrative ? And how distinctly have the purest domestic instincts here been elevated and transfigured into one of the most lovely forms of divine adoration religion has ever assumed. Prejudice is conquered and silenced surely in presence of such a moving scene. The true trinity of the Catholic Church is after all Father, Mother and Child, and perhaps a nobler and worthier could not well be found. The writer says :

“ The one candle barely lighted the mean little altar, on which were placed a few withering field-flowers ; but it lit with a faint glow the Virgin’s figure. There she was, still young, smiling as she had done through all the forty years that had passed over the eyes that looked at her now. The poor worn figure still stood, an image of immortal sweetness. The flickering light almost made her smile seem that of life, and put something of recognition in her downward gaze. Yes ; I knew her heart better now. She had known love that had grown to pain and yet been love ; a heart pierced by a sword, yet a sword driven by love, she had known a joy that had lifted itself by gasping steps, higher and higher, above

¹ *The Westminster Gazette*, Weekly Edition, 8th Nov. 1913. Article on “ A Forgotten Shrine,” by Lady Macdonell.

disappointment, terror, and death. Oh, Mother! type of all love, the mightiest, the holiest, holding in thine arms that miraculous gift for the world to worship and love, the eternal, ever-renewed miracle of the Child, smiling, but not like the cruel goddess who has no arms wherewith to comfort or shield, leave not this obdurate world, but teach our hearts the mystery of suffering and love! From the road came sounds of footsteps and voices, growing clearer as they approached, the happy, aimless talk of a woman and a little child. I heard their rough shoes grate on the sill behind me. The prattle ceased. The woman's voice was lowered, but she spoke with innocent familiarity, See, child, how pretty! Mutter Gottes und Jesu Kind! Then, a tired sigh, and the creaking of the bench as she knelt heavily down, the child scrambling beside her. And then silence."

Such divinities represent higher centres which, forming in human nature, supersede and then repudiate, even with horror and scorn, the idolatries of the older faiths. These and numerous other divinities, their symbols and their cults, thus represent and evoke in the heart of the living individual the rich legacies of past racial experience.

And now let us see, if we can, more precisely what is the real value and function for religion of these nobler race emotions. That they have contributed to the survival of the race is manifestly true and may be frankly admitted. But does this exhaust their full significance? We believe not. Besides their utilitarian or survival value in the struggle for existence, whether for the individual or for the race, or for both, they have, we may be assured, performed another and still nobler function. These hereditary race immediacies in truth enable the finite self dated in time and located in place to transcend its personal limitations; and, by appropriating, to live in the experience of a larger and more inclusive life. And it is on account of their performance of this higher function in human experience that they have been trans-

muted and exalted into religion. Just as we saw, it will be recollected, that the intellect, though its function was undoubtedly at first purely utilitarian, and though the pragmatist still refuses to credit it with any higher value, yet has beyond doubt in its evolution undergone transfiguration of function, and assumed in philosophy a form of activity in which, without ulterior reference to the satisfaction of any transient needs, it seeks to discover and know the nature of the ultimate reality of all things; so also it has been with these greater immediacies, they too have been transfigured and have become religion, and now in and through them the finite ego transcending itself seeks to apprehend the all-inclusive Perfection.

And in this connection it will be well to call attention once more to the peril inevitably incurred by limiting the scope and value of intellectual activity to its purely utilitarian, evolutionary, and racial function, after the manner of Wm. James, Bergson, and pragmatists generally. To do so is, as we have seen, playing with a double-edged tool, especially in the case of the religious thinker; since it will be claimed, and rightly, by the psychological sceptic of the school of Hume, that what we mean by love must in all consistency be similarly interpreted. The two strands of consciousness—thought and immediate feeling—cannot in this matter be placed in quite separate categories, but must of necessity be dealt with on the same principle of interpretation, whatever the principle adopted may be. To proceed in any other way would be arbitrary and unreasonable in the extreme. But this being the case, if pragmatism be the exclusive method of interpretation recognized, then of course religion will collapse on both sides of our nature at once, *i.e.* so far as having any transcendental meaning is concerned; and we shall have to regard its function as entirely limited to the discharge of a useful social police duty towards our too rampant individualistic impulses: or at best as

merely serving to provide us with an imaginary Utopia for a refuge from the sad realities of our mortal life, from which we can find no other way of escape. Such, it will be recalled, were the views of religion respectively of Mr Benjamin Kidd and J. S. Mill.

At this point we may suitably recall the interpretation of the deities adored by the religious consciousness which we found in the pages of Prof. Menzies' excellent manual, namely, that they represented the effort of man to rise out of his weakness and finitude and to exalt himself above himself. This interpretation, it will be noted, fully coincides with the views of Mr Carpenter. The worship of those divinities that objectify the vaster and profounder immediate experiences of the race is undoubtedly the means whereby man has long sought, and still seeks, to evoke and to maintain within himself a life far larger and more inclusive than could ever appertain to him in his distinct individuality. For let us not forget that the human self, having implicitly within it the fulness of the undivided absolute Perfection, of necessity yearns and strives after a fuller and more inclusive life than is possible to it in its apparent isolation and separateness from nature and from its fellows of the human and animal world. And just through these emotional uprisings from profounder levels man does in fact succeed in transcending the limits of his individualism, and in a very true sense becomes in immediate feeling inclusive of the race to which he belongs. This, then, is the real function of religion ; it is man's conscious effort to transcend himself, to escape his finitude, to become one with a larger life than his own. This surely is a very noble, worthy, and generous interpretation of historic idolatries by Mr Carpenter, calculated to break down many of our religious antipathies, and broaden our tolerance even towards the lower faiths of the world. And, let us add, an interpretation that seems to us as true as it is also generous and sympathetic.

And now let us see how these well-established psycho-

logical facts respecting the inheritance of race experience can be brought to bear on the question with which our present inquiry opened, namely, Is it possible to experience the Perfect without being or becoming the Perfect Experience itself, that is to say, without being absorbed or lost in God. May it not be that we have here alighted upon the true psychological method of solving this problem, a problem which so many thinkers have found in the past and which some still find, as we have seen, insoluble, except by postulating the extinction of the finite as such by its utter absorption into the Infinite whence it came? We have sufficiently seen how beyond reasonable doubt through its inheritance of the greater race emotions the finite self does in fact transcend the limits of its individuality without thereby ceasing to be a distinct centre of interest. It does, without ceasing to be itself, nevertheless become by immediate feeling one with and inclusive of the rich life and experience of the race to which it belongs. If it is possible then for the individual in this manner to enter into the life of the race without *being* the race, there is surely nothing contradictory, nothing absurd or impossible, in the supposition that a profounder and more inclusive immediate experience may be yet in store for it. We may, indeed, by the application of the foregoing psychological principles, find rational justification for religion in its quest, namely, to attain by immediate experience to the apprehension of the Perfect without the dissolution of its finitude. Without including within itself all the details of the manifold into which the Absolute exfoliates, it may then in this manner, by direct apprehension, that is to say, by and in immediate feeling, experience the joy of that Perfection of which all universes with the myriad finite forms they contain are the more or less complete expression.

According, then, to this interpretation of religious experience all these race-emotions so rich, varied and

vast, and extending back through such countless millions of years, and that now well up in the finite centre of a single human self, are evidences that there is direct connection of the self with the larger life of the race. But there are evidences also of the possibility of our transcending even these race-experiences and entering into direct and immediate communion with that still larger and diviner life whence the universe itself flows. All these enlargements of the self through race-experience are but preparatory expansions, propædeutic to an experience yet more exalted. These various racial experiences, as we have already intimated, differ in quality and value ; that is to say, in the degree and extent of their inclusiveness and rationality. The objective test of their worth is to be found in their capacity for rational exfoliation into both thought and conduct, and thus they constitute the steps of that sanctuary wherein at last, the evolutionary process having so far reached its goal, the heart of man enters the highest experience of all, known as the mystic union of the self with God. Here at last the strands of thought and feeling unite and become one in a higher immediacy, the distinction of object and subject is overcome ; creed and cult are alike transcended, as also the adoration of any external divinity or divine incarnation ; the finite self rises to the rapture of immediate experience of absolute Perfection, yet without the extinction of its uniqueness or its finitude. To use again the fine expression of Plotinus, it is the flight of the Alone to the Alone, the ineffable blessedness of the self's direct vision of God.

But we now reach another order of consciousness than is common to man. At present there are comparatively but a few of the race whose spirits have found wings strong enough to bear them to heights so lofty. Indeed, the newly recognized biological principle known as "Mutation" may with truth be said here to find so far its last and highest exemplification. Yet what the few have attained

is, we may hope, the forecast and the promise of what will be the experience of the race as a whole before the story of the human species on this planet is complete. If such experience be no delusive dream, but the deepest and truest, and, we may add, the most rational of all the experiences of the finite self, then we may well be optimists as respects the destiny of the race at large, and see the deeper meaning in those great words of St Paul to the Romans, " For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God " (chap. viii. 18, 19).

CHAPTER XIII

EXPERIENCING THE PERFECT

AT the stage of our inquiry into the nature of religious experience and its relation to the Ultimate Reality which we have now reached, we may, we think, without hesitation assert for the mystic that his claim to have experience of Absolute Perfection whilst still retaining his limitations as a finite being, has in it nothing impossible, nothing contradictory; but that, on the contrary, such experience is the fitting completion, the one and only rational justification and appropriate crown, of the whole evolutionary process. The *élan vital* has reached here a goal which, as we said, throws its illuminating light on the whole movement, revealing its metaphysical basis, and thus rendering it intelligible. And yet our survey would, we think, be deemed scarcely complete, did we not briefly indicate more in detail, at least some of the main features of this great experience, and adduce in illustration the testimony of mystics themselves. We shall thus attain a clearer and more exact conception as to the contents of a fully developed mysticism; and shall at the same time be able by means of this conception the better to comprehend the real, the final goal of the religious quest.

We must, however, of necessity be brief. A whole volume might well be devoted to the exposition of the different elements that go to constitute a fully developed mystic experience and the various forms it assumes. For, we are here dealing with an experience of vast, indeed, of

illimitable range and significance ; we are seeking to explore those regions of the mind that belong to the transcendental and eternal order. Within the mystic consciousness itself, consequently, there are possibilities of indefinite development and inexhaustible variety. From the fount of this experience the great thinkers, poets, artists, and saints of all ages, of all nations, and of all religions, have drawn their inspiration. In describing a region of consciousness so vast and inclusive, therefore, even the most detailed description must needs seem but meagre and inadequate. Again, we must warn the reader that properly to understand what mysticism is he needs in some degree to be a mystic himself. For we are not here dealing with an experience common to humanity, and one with which, therefore, if a normally constituted person, he may assume himself to be acquainted. On the contrary, our subject is, as we have said, an experience which constitutes the final goal of life's whole evolution, and one which, consequently, has been reached at present by but comparatively few of the members of the race. If, therefore, one has never had some measure of mystic experience himself, necessarily the most exact and detailed description must fail to give him more than an indefinite conception concerning it.

After these short preliminary remarks we will proceed to enumerate a few of the main features of a full and genuine mystic experience, and then call attention to some of the principal forms it assumes.

(I) And first we must note the apparent suddenness with which this experience emerges in consciousness. If, indeed, the mystic experience is, as we have said, the highest example in mental evolution of what, in biological science, is known as a mutation, then the apparent suddenness and unexpectedness of its arrival quite accords with what we should naturally expect. Yet here again it is well to utter a word of caution against the supposition that it is anything totally new added to the attainments

of the past. No mutations ever really are of this character. Rather are they, as we observed, extensions and qualitative changes appearing, somewhat unexpectedly and suddenly, in the functions of organs and powers already existing. Let us take an illustration from the physical world. Water up to 32° F. remains a solid. Although up to that point heat may have been all the while accumulating, yet no qualitative difference is observed. But at this stage what has been termed "a discrete degree" is reached, a sort of physical mutation takes place, and the solid is at once transformed into a liquid. At 212° or boiling-point another discrete degree is reached, another qualitative change is observed, and the liquid is suddenly transformed into invisible vapour. Now something analogous to this happens in the sphere of consciousness. At a certain stage the perceptual consciousness of the mere animal becomes transmuted into the rational reflective self-consciousness of man. And this mutation, if we may believe Prof. Metchnikoff, took place almost if not quite suddenly. And the view we offer regarding mysticism is, that we witness in it another mutation, that a new and higher type of experience again emerges, and the rational self-consciousness of ordinary humanity becomes transmuted into the universal or cosmic consciousness of the mystic, characterised by an intense sense of identity with God. The mystic experience is as much higher, we contend, than the ordinary human self-consciousness of which it is a mutation, as this latter in its turn is than the simple consciousness of the lower animals from which it originally emerged.

We need perhaps hardly say that the testimony of the mystics themselves fully supports this interpretation of their experience. No words could well be clearer and more emphatic, for instance, than those of St Paul. The suddenness of his conversion is beyond question. That it presented, too, a distinct mutation in consciousness his

letters leave us in no doubt. "If any man be in Christ," he writes, "he is a new creature; the old things have passed away; behold, they are become new."¹ The gospel he preached, so he tells his Galatian converts, was not after man. He did not receive it from man, nor was he taught it; it came to him through revelation.² It was an inward experience, for, he says, "it was God's good pleasure to reveal his son in me."³ And in his Epistle to the Ephesians, if we may take this document to be Pauline, he exhorts those to whom he is writing, "to be renewed in the spirit of their mind, to put on *the new man*, which is after God, created in righteousness and holiness of truth."⁴ If our definition of mystic experience be correct, namely, that it is the direct and immediate experience of Divine Perfection, if the mystic is he who has "a genius for the Absolute," then the suddenness and completeness of the transfiguration of consciousness is quite in accordance with the nature of things. In the mystic then we witness the emergence of a new and higher type of humanity; quite another centre of experience has been formed in the mind. Speaking of his own experience the non-Christian Plotinus, for example, says, almost in the same language as Paul, "He who knows this will know what I say, and be convinced that the soul has then *another life*."⁵

We conclude, then, that in the mystic experience we witness the highest mutation life or consciousness has yet undergone in the course of its evolution, but that this does not mean anything totally new added on to the attainments of the past. Rather is Mysticism the somewhat sudden emergence into full daylight splendour of an experience, the dawn of which had long begun to break in human consciousness. This transition has no doubt been prepared for subconsciously by the long previous religious

¹ 2 Cor. v. 17.

² Gal. i. 11, 12.

³ Gal. i. 15, 16.

⁴ 1 Eph. iv. 23, 24.

⁵ Quoted by Miss Underhill, "Mysticism," p. 216.

history of the race ; and consequently only in the most developed religions does it emerge from the subliminal region of the mind into clear consciousness, when the appropriate conditions occur. Its apparent suddenness is due to the nature of the experience itself, being as we have said a direct apprehension of the Ultimate Reality in its own proper character as Perfection. It is thus a direct transition of consciousness from the finite to the Infinite, from the phenomenal to the Noumenal, from the temporal to the Eternal.

(2) The second characteristic of mysticism to which we would draw attention is, that it demands, almost invariably, solitude and silence. To attain the mystic experience a certain state of mind is required, aptly described by Wordsworth, who on this subject was no mean psychologist, as a wise passiveness.¹ By this he meant that the activity of the analytic intellect, which is for ever busying itself with the mere details and particulars of existence and always "murders to dissect," as also the activity of our finite will, which is ever striving for some lower and transient satisfaction, must both be laid to rest, and the mind be allowed to subside into a state of quiet receptiveness, if the messages which convey the deeper meanings of the universe are to reach our inner ear. But to cultivate such a state of mind we need to be alone. Wm. James, it will be recalled, in defining what religion, for the purpose of his great lectures, should be, said, "it shall be the experience of individual men in their solitude, so far as they apprehend themselves to stand in relation to whatever they may consider the divine."² Solitude has, indeed, often been termed the mother of genius, and certainly religious genius is no exception to the rule. Jesus, Paul, Buddha, Mohammed, Tauler, à Kempis, Francis of Assisi, Geo. Fox, and the name of many another genius in religion will readily occur to the

¹ See the poem "Expostulation and Reply."

² "Varieties of Religious Experience," p. 31.

mind in this connection. "I value solitude," wrote F. J. Hamerton, "for sincerity and peace, and for the better understanding of the thoughts that are truly ours. Only in solitude do we learn our inmost nature and its needs."¹ The psychological reason why solitude and silence are so needful to the discovery of our inmost nature is evident; for it is only when no longer inhibited and repressed by the activities and distractions of our more superficial everyday life, that those fountains within us are unsealed, or at least able more copiously to flow, which have their source in those depths of our being where our life is one with the life of God. Thus it came to pass that it was amid the solitude and silence afforded by the great forests of India, that the Upanishads, which contain beyond doubt the profoundest metaphysical religion ever yet given to the world, had their birth. And again it was in the more peaceful retirement and seclusion of the monastic life of the middle ages that our modern classical music, so profoundly religious and mystical in its real significance, first arose.²

And for a similar reason there is almost invariably a marked tendency on the part of the mystic to dispense with the usual forms of religion. What is termed "*cultus*," that is to say, the established and accepted traditional rites and usages of worship, is generally felt by the mystic to be strangely foreign and irrelevant to his deeper religious experience, and rather the cause of distraction and hindrance, than a source of help. He will often feel himself strangely alone amid the throng of worshippers, and the loneliness of his spirit seeks a kindred solitude. For this reason the mystic, in proportion to the depth of his mysticism, will often for a time, if not permanently, abandon these stated forms; or, if in deference to social custom or the demands of authority he still continues to pay outward respect to institutional

¹ "Intellectual Life," p. 325.

² "Music and Morals," by Haweis, p. 35.

religion, it is certainly not through the instrumentality of such observance that he scales the loftiest and purest heights of his mystic experience. It was, indeed, no mere caprice or eccentricity that prompted the first Quakers, following the example and teaching of their great leader George Fox, to give up all ritual forms, all the sacraments and ceremonies of religion, and to await in silent expectation the visitations of the Spirit. Wordsworth again, who was not only a mystic when most inspired, but, as we have just remarked, possessed in addition the immense advantage of great powers of psychological insight and exact description, portrays the mystic for us in language which was, without doubt, dictated by his own personal experience of mystic moods and the condition of their appearance in consciousness. Writing of the lonely herdsman amid the Scottish mountains, he says :—

In such access of mind, in such high hour
of visitation from the living God,
Thought was not, in enjoyment it expired.
No thanks he breathed, he proffered no request ;
Rapt into still communion that transcends
The imperfect offices of praise and prayer.
His mind was a thanksgiving to the Power
That made him ; it was blessedness and love.¹

If indeed it be the desire of the mystic, as we have said, to enter into direct and immediate experience of the divine Perfection, *i.e.* if he seeks to experience Perfection as it is in itself, without mediation or intervention of any sort ; then that he should seek solitude or silence, or both, and freedom also from all the distractions even of institutional religion with its inevitable cultus of an external objective deity, is psychologically sound and perfectly intelligible. He adopts as his motto the words of the psalmist as embodying for him practical truth of the highest importance :—Be *still*, and *know*—that I am God ; or, if we may again quote the words of

¹ " Excursion," bk. i.

Plotinus, mysticism when at its purest and best is essentially the flight of "the Alone to the Alone."

It is possible, however, some non-mystical critic might be inclined to indulge in the somewhat cynical reflection, that the mystic, self-complacent in the great discovery of his own identity with God, and finding henceforth no other object more worthy of adoration than himself, might well become his own divinity. On the contrary, none is so sublime and sincere in his humility, none is so profound in the spirit of true adoration as he. But his adoration, in harmony with the great mutation of his consciousness, undergoes a like transformation. Having discovered his own infinitude in the life of God, the light of this transfiguring experience falls on everything else, lighting it up with a new and spiritual significance. To him, as to Wordsworth, now the least of things seems infinite and the meanest flower can give thoughts too deep for tears. "The attitude of the God-conscious man of the Upanishads towards the universe," says Rabindranath Tagore, "is that of a deep feeling of adoration. His object of worship is present everywhere. It is the one living truth that makes all realities true. This truth is not only of knowledge but of devotion. Namonamah : we bow to him everywhere and over and over again."¹ This, indeed, is the attitude of true mysticism when its inmost spirit has been set completely free. Having found the Absolute within itself, it discovers the same Absolute everywhere, implicit in all things. But not to the finite in its finitude does the mystic bow, but to the Infinite "it half conceals yet half reveals." And this is surely the noblest as it is also the simplest and truest worship disentangled from all acted metaphors and verbal tropes. The intellect is now no longer divorced from the heart, and both can adore in unison. And in this, the most rational of all the various forms in which the Supreme Being has ever been worshipped, we may well believe

¹ Lecture delivered in Caxton Hall, Westminster, 19th May 1913.

the race as a whole will at length unite, when the lower cults, having rendered in their way indispensable service to the developing religious consciousness, will perhaps cease to be. Then we shall all bow to him everywhere and over and over again.

(3) Once more. The true mystic experience is always characterized by a sense of great intellectual illumination, or by what is usually termed intuition. Real intuition, it should be borne in mind, always has an element of thought or knowledge in it as well as of feeling. Intuition is, therefore, cognitive or noëtic in quality, and not bare feeling or emotion. It is a union of the strands of thought and feeling in a higher inclusive immediacy. We might perhaps more exactly define it as knowledge in and through immediate feeling. In his important work, "Thought and Things," Prof. J. Mark Baldwin, after pointing out that thought as such cannot resolve its own dualisms, and that what we call Rationalism is as helpless before the final problem of the meaning of Reality as is the cruder Pragmatism, goes on to say it is in a form of contemplation æsthetic in character that the immediacy of experience seeks to re-establish itself. "In the highest form of such contemplation, which comes to itself as genuine and profound Æsthetic Experience, the strands of the earlier and diverging dualisms are again *merged and fused*. In this experience of a fusion which is not a mixture, but which issues in a meaning of its own sort and kind, an experience whose essential character is just this unity of comprehension, consciousness attains its completest, its most direct, and its final apprehension of what Reality is and means."¹

Now this interpretation of the highest form of contemplation, as being in truth the completest, the most direct, and the final apprehension or intuition of Reality, applies in its fullest extent, we hold, to the monistic experience of the genuine mystic. In this transcendental

¹ "Thought and Things," vol. i, preface x, and vol. iii. p. 256.

immediacy we are presented with no bare emotion, with no mere ecstatic rapture ; but with an experience that carries with it the deepest insight, with a state of genuine knowledge of what Reality is and means. For the mystic all dualisms are transcended, whether of mind and matter, thought and feeling, object and subject, or God and man. All things are seen in the transfiguring light of their transcendental unity. Even Wm. James, it will be recalled, tells us that in mystic states depths of truth are reached which are unplumbed by the discursive intellect. In them, he reports, we have perception of fact as direct for those who experience them as any physical sensations can be. They are, he says, face to face presentations of what seems immediately to exist ; in them the barriers between the individual and the Absolute are overcome, and this is the great mystic achievement.¹

The mystic, then, in and through these high immediacies, these transcendental states, discerns that his true self is also the Self of the Absolute. And yet by this discovery he does not lose his finitude ; but still retains, not merely undiminished, but even in deepened and intensified form, his own distinctness and uniqueness as a finite centre of experience. It will be seen, therefore, that the mystic experience, when it reaches the highest development of its cognitive content, does not simply claim likeness to God, nor even union *with* God. This would still be essentially dualistic, implying two terms, God *and* himself, with some connecting bond *between*. What the mystic declares is more than this, he affirms his fundamental *identity* with God. “*That art thou,*” this experience says to us, speaking in the language of the Vedanta, “not a part, not a mode of *That*, but identically *That*, that absolute Spirit of the World.” Similar utterances meet us also in the Christian Mystics, utterances which are at once recognized as Vedantic in sentiment though probably not in origin. We may, indeed, credit them

¹ “Varieties of Religious Experience,” pp. 380, 423-4, 419.

with being no mere philosophical echo, but the expression of the genuine, original, personal experiences of the mystics themselves, and as such doubly valuable. "God," says Tauler, "is the End of all unity, and in turn all diversities are united and become one in the One Only Being. . . . Therefore go and carry thereto all thy diversities, which are so great and so incomprehensible, that all may be made one in the Oneness of his Being."¹ "He to whom all things are one," writes Thomas à Kempis in a remarkable monistic outburst, "he who reduceth all things to one, and seeth all things in one, may enjoy a quiet mind and remain peaceable in God."² Here we reach the supreme Gnosis, the intuition that penetrates to the deep foundations of the world. The Absolute is one, and we are one in and with the Absolute.

(4) The next feature in mystical experience to which attention is due is one closely related to the preceding, namely, its universality or inclusiveness. This is usually considered the great paradox of the mystic state; for how, it is asked, can the finite ego experience directly the universality, the all-inclusiveness, of the Absolute? Such an experience by the non-mystic mind is usually doubted or denied as impossible and quite contradictory, and to suppose it is sometimes even treated as fanatical. But that it is possible, without contradiction, for the finite self to rise to such an experience, it was our endeavour in the last chapter to show. Mysticism, we then said, is essentially and distinctively an immediate experience of Perfection, and by Perfection we meant the completely harmonious experience of an all-embracing Absolute Self. And just as we may and do enter by immediate experience into the life of the race, just as we have inherited numerous race immediacies without thereby including all the details of ancestral history in our own; so it is perfectly conceivable, without contradiction,

¹ "The Inner Way," pp. 322, 323.

² "Imitation of Christ," bk. i. chap. iii. sec. 2.

that the finite self may also apprehend in immediate experience the perfect all-inclusive life, the creative joy of the Absolute ; and this without incurring the dissolution of its individuality. But, having committed ourselves to this view, the reader would naturally expect and demand that the mystic's experience be shown to exhibit in some form or other traces of this quality of all-embracingness. And as a matter of fact it does. By the great illumination which visits him the mystic sees all things in the radiance of a new and transfiguring light. He sees them no longer pluralistically, merely in their temporal and spatial relations as mutually exclusive and external ; but in their unity, or *sub specie æternitatis*. And this vision has become possible to him, as we have observed, only by reason of an inward change and development of his own consciousness, constituting a marked mutation, a mutation, namely, by which he experiences himself no longer in his separateness, as an independent individual, but as one in life and being with the Absolute Self. And so that the finite self in the person of the mystic may thus attain to direct apprehension of the life of the Perfect is no mere theory, rests on no purely analogical possibility, but is confirmed by the presence and activity of this element of universality in the mystic's own experience ; and this presence and activity are indicated in various ways, the principal of which we will briefly enumerate.

And in the first place, by reason of this discovery, through direct intuition, of his identity with God, the mystic knows himself to be already, though in an immediate and non-temporal sense, whatever by his utmost striving in time he seeks to become. Not to become what he is not, but to exfoliate what he now immediately is—this henceforth is the true purpose and inspiring motive to activity in the mystic's life. This is indeed the sublime paradox of mysticism, that the mystic may be truly said to pursue what he already possesses, and to seek

to become what he already is ; for in the bliss of his immediately experienced oneness with God, he already enjoys the fulness of the divine perfection. Thus Sankara, the great Vedanta thinker, says, " If it be said that the soul will go to Brahma, that means that it will in future attain, or rather, that it will be in future what, though unconsciously, it always has been, namely, Brahman. For when we speak of some one going to some one else, it cannot be one and the same who is distinguished as the subject and as the object. Also, if we speak of worship, that can only be, if the worshipper is different from the worshipped. By true knowledge the individual soul does not *become* Brahman ; but *is* Brahman as soon as it knows what it really is, and always has been." ¹ In similar strain, Boethius the great Roman thinker of the fifth century, defines what we mean by eternity in terms which could hardly be improved upon. Eternity, he says, is the complete and perfect possession of unlimited life all at once. But whatever lives in time, itself present, proceeds from past to future, and there is not anything that is established in time which can embrace the whole extent of its life at once. But that which embraces the whole plenitude of life at once, from which nought of the future is absent, from which nought of the past has flowed away, *that* is rightly deemed *eternal* ; and that of necessity, being in possession of itself, must ever be present to itself, and must grasp the infinity of moving time as present. But temporal existence, he says, has " to stretch by going that life the plenitude of which it could not grasp by abiding." ² Boethius, it is evident, would see no contradiction in the mystic's experience, except indeed such apparent contradiction as all evolution presents, an apparent contradiction, which, as we have seen, the metaphysics of the transcendental or eternal

¹ Quoted in " Theosophy or Psychological Religion," by Max Müller, p. 284.

² Quoted by Rev. P. Wicksteed in " Studies in Theology," pp. 43, 44.

life can and does solve. His future progress is, therefore, to the mystic of the nature of an analytic process ; nothing absolutely new ever happens to him, but all his future is but the detailed unfolding and expression in time of the contents of that immediate experience of blissful completeness in and by which he knows his identity with God. This sense of universal possession is clearly expressed by St Paul in that splendid outburst of mystic feeling where he says to the Corinthians : " Wherefore let no man glory in men. For all things are yours ; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come ; all are yours ; and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's." ¹

This sense of all-inclusiveness in the mystic extends also to the rest of the universe, animate and inanimate, as well as to his own as yet unrealized future. The mystic in the light of his identity with God discovers himself, what he terms his true and deeper self, everywhere, and the whole universe becomes to him a true home. In Francis of Assisi it assumed a form of extreme and beautiful naïveté. It was when rapt in mystic ecstasy that he composed his lovely " Cantic to the Sun," calling the sun, the wind, the fire his brothers, and the moon, the water, and even death itself his sisters. At other times he expressed his deep affinity and oneness with all living creatures by preaching to them, exhorting and appealing to them in terms of affectionate tenderness as his own kindred.² Traherne likewise, though in less imaginative and primitive fashion, eloquently expresses the same sense of inclusive identity when he writes : " You never enjoy the universe aright till the sea itself floweth in your veins, till you are clothed with the heavens and crowned with the stars, and perceive yourself to be sole heir of the world, and more so, because men are in it who are every one sole heirs as well as you. Till you can

¹ 1 Cor. iii. 21, 22.

² " Life of Francis of Assisi," by P. Sabatier, chap. xviii.

sing and rejoice and delight in God, as misers do in gold and as kings in sceptres, you never enjoy the world." This same sense of latent all-inclusiveness inspires the prayer of Richard Jefferies in "The Story of My Heart," and in "Nature and Eternity." "Let me joy with all living creatures," he says in the latter essay, "let me suffer with them all, the reward of feeling a deeper, grander life would be amply sufficient." This sense of all-inclusiveness finds its clearest and completest philosophical expression, however, in the Upanishads. Here the identification of the soul with God as the all-inclusive One is affirmed without scruple. *Tat tvam asi*, That art thou, they say; and the expression means, Thine Atman, thy soul, thy self, is the all-embracing, absolute Brahman.¹

Again, this sense of the all-inclusiveness of his true self finds utterance in the mystic's affirmation of his fundamental faith, namely, that God is love. To the mystic this is self-evident truth. The outflowing of his own heart towards created things is to him the surest evidence that he is one with God. For what is love but an essentially all-inclusive, harmonious principle, a principle, therefore, essentially divine? Love, indeed, is to the heart what reason is to the intellect; each is seeking in its own way to overcome discrepancies; and both witness to the controlling activity within the finite of the One Ultimate Reality revealing its true nature as the all-inclusive and harmonious Experience. To the most penetrating mystic intuition, therefore, to say that the universe is rational is exactly the same thing as to say that God is love.

And together with this outgoing of an all-inclusive love towards creation and as an essential element of it, there comes the assurance that all evil is necessarily only relative. For the perfection of God which the mystic directly experiences, being thus an all-embracing unity

¹ See "Theosophy or Psychological Religion," by Max Müller, pp. 105, 285-290.

which is essentially love, is for that very reason an active, reconciling principle ; a principle that includes all things within itself, but so includes them that all discords are overcome and nothing permitted ultimately to mar its perfect harmony. Hence the well-grounded optimism of the true mystic. Certainly if God as love is and is to be All in all, then eternal evil is a contradiction, and death, as Tennyson in his own mystic experience saw it to be, "a laughable impossibility."¹

(5) Another rightly emphasized quality of the mystic experience is its activity or creativeness. The reader will recollect that when we discussed the question what constitutes Perfect Experience, we found one of its essential principles to be its creative activity. The Absolute Self, we then observed, is no mere abstract unity or identity, but a concrete, self-revealing or creative Power. And so it happens that the mystic, directly experiencing as he does this divine Perfection in its own proper character as The Perfect, necessarily participates in its creative activity. The finite self, having attained to a consciousness of its identity, though finite, with the Absolute or Perfect Self, knows itself to be an organ for the expression of that Perfection of which it has thus attained to an immediate experience. Hence the mystic, however apparently passive and receptive he may be in his quiet moments of contemplative joy, sooner or later discovers the inevitable activist tendency of the experience, which at length asserts itself. As in the case of all true genius, the experience, he finds, demands some form of expression or embodiment. Life, all life, is essentially active, essentially creative, and never more so than when it reaches the highest stages of its development. Creative activity, then, is integral to the mystic experience, which was accordingly correctly described by Wordsworth as "the deep *power* of joy."

¹ See his "Ancient Sage," and "Life of Tennyson," vol. i. p. 320, quoted in Inge, "Christian Mysticism," pp. 14-15.

And here it should be noted that just as the form of the mystic's worship, when set free from the detaining restraints of custom or tradition, of necessity undergoes transformation in accord with the nature of his experience, so also does the intrinsic meaning and motive of his activity. He does not now labour to create perfection, but to express, to embody, to reveal it. To him his activity is not creative in the sense in which it is for M. Bergson and his disciples, but a progressive discovery and disclosure of a Perfection that is now and ever has been eternally real. Pragmatism and popular theology present us with a really finite God with whom we are called upon to co-operate in the effort to reduce, if may be, the chaotic contents of the universe to beauty and order, but necessarily with no guarantee or certainty of ultimate success. But to the vision of the mystic there is no such chaotic universe waiting for him to help to set right. Whatever of mystery there may yet remain in the evil and error of the world, at least their chief bitterness is gone for him when he views them *sub specie æternitatis*; their apparent absoluteness vanishes and they become purely relative; they are seen to be but materials for the expression of that eternal harmony to which his inner ear has now become attuned. The clouds of fear, of doubt, of uncertainty, and even of despair that were often round about him, lift from off his soul when to his deeper insight it is revealed, that he is not here to help a finite, developing God make a chaotic universe perfect, but rather to render himself in his own special time and place in the universe an ever more efficient medium for the expression of a Perfection, which, as we have said, he has already discerned to be eternally real.

The author of the "Theologia Germanica" says that the perfect men, by which, of course, he means mystics, have no other desire than to be to the Eternal Goodness what his hand is to a man; and that they have lost the fear of hell and the hope of heaven. The implication

here is that to the mystic, the security of the universe, that all things in it shall work together for good, is not dependent upon his poor wisdom and individual will, but is guaranteed by the eternally perfect life and love of God, of which he is but an organ. And this assurance enables him to preserve his calmness and his dignity amid his most laborious toils, and in the face of the fiercest antagonisms or even of apparent defeat. "A true lover of God," says the same author, "loveth Him or the Eternal Goodness alike in having and in not having, in sweetness and bitterness, in good or evil report, and the like; for he seeketh alone the honour of God and not his own either in spiritual or natural things. And therefore he standeth alike unshaken in all things and at all seasons." The mystic is thus able to read the profounder meaning of the words "It is more blessed to give than to receive," for he always regards himself in this light, namely, as but an instrument or organ for the communication of good, for the expression of the Eternal Perfection. "For when vain imagination and ignorance," to quote once more the same author, "are turned into an understanding and knowledge of the truth, the claiming of anything for our own will cease of itself. Then the man says: Behold, I, poor fool that I was, imagined it was I, but, behold, it is, and was of a truth, God."¹

The form the divine perfection will take in him will of necessity depend on the special circumstances and genius of the mystic himself. Light is the same whether it is enshrined in a dewdrop or pours forth from the sun. And so with the light of mystic genius. It may shine very beautifully in brother Lawrence busy in the kitchen of his monastery, and it may reveal itself in the splendour of Wordsworth's "Tintern Abbey," or of "The Divina Commedia" of Dante.

(6) Another characteristic feature of a genuine mystic experience, when it is true to its inmost nature, is its

¹ "Theo. Germ.," chaps. iv. and x.

demand for independence and freedom. Prof. Starbuck, in his "Psychology of Religion," points out that there are three precepts appropriate respectively to the three distinct stages of growth: in childhood, *conform*; in youth, *be thyself*; in maturity, *lose thyself*.¹ This is strictly true, and emphatically so in the case of religious development. In childhood we have to conform; there is nothing else, nothing better we can do. We are then necessarily imitative, and to know how to imitate is the indispensable condition of successful life in the young both of man and animals.² But when we arrive at the distinctively human or self-conscious stage of mental development, and discover reflectively that we are, each of us, unique centres of interest, and can say, therefore, not only, I am I and no one else, but also I am I and *like* no one else, then, as Prof. Starbuck says, the appropriate precept is, Be thyself. This discovery of the self and its uniqueness is, as we have seen, a great epoch, a real mutation in the evolution of consciousness, and is preparatory or propædeutic to a still higher experience yet to come. The ethics of our life change accordingly. Obedience and imitation have to yield to a higher inward law which, as Prof. Starbuck says, takes on the form of the precept: Be thy self and to thine own self be true.³ But in the further development of consciousness, as we have seen, a third and still higher stage is reached, namely, the cosmic or universal. The finite self now discovers that it has an infinite aspect, that it is in its ultimate nature one with the Absolute or Perfect Life, and now a new ethic is demanded, an ethic that is appropriately expressed in Prof. Starbuck's third precept: Lose thyself. It means that we are to sink the interests of our private, separate, finite selves in the life of the Infinite within us; in other words, it says to us: Be an organ for the

¹ P. 415.

² See this fascinatingly illustrated in Long's "School of the Woods," *passim*.

³ P. 413.

expression of the life of the Perfect Self which has become incarnate in you and of which you are henceforth to be a special and unique revelation.

The life of the mystic is, therefore, strictly autonomous. As it is the life of The Perfect directly and immediately experienced by a finite centre, it demands the same freedom within the limits of the finite centre, as it possesses when it exfoliates into all the universes of time and space ; just as a great musician refuses any other restraint except such as is implied in the nature of the material he has chosen as a medium for the expression of his art. Such limitations being natural are, however, not really restraints, but only such limitations as are necessary if there is to be any expression or exfoliation at all. And so if thought, as we have maintained, has on its part imperial rights of its own, if to be valid it must be free ; so it is also with the divine experience of genuine mysticism. It is essential to its fundamental nature that it escape the limitations of outward authority. It is original, not secondary and imitative. It claims the right to be itself, to reveal its genuine nature without hindrance, without reference to aught beyond itself. This is the claim all true genius makes. Other personalities, historical or living, no doubt act upon it by way of stimulus, since genius has always an awakening, evoking influence on genius. But no personality can be taken by the mystic permanently as a model for his imitation without seriously endangering the freedom, the uniqueness and originality of the divine consciousness within him. Perhaps one of the most unhappy titles ever given to a great mystic work is that borne by the "Imitatio Christi." To be like Christ you certainly must not *imitate* Him ; for if we know anything about Him from the records and traditions that have come down to us, the very last thing we should expect Him to do is to consent to imitate any one else. To be continually asking what some one else would do if he were in your place is one of the most certain ways

of quenching the spark of divine originality within yourself. Where for any reason genius consents to wear the fetters, however gilded, of external authority and control, there will invariably be some signs of enfeeblement, there will be less of that glad abandonment which is the note of the highest creative joy. Some element of doubt, of hesitation, even of fear, will be detected more or less in almost all its movements. And so genuine mysticism, mysticism at its highest and best, must be free ; is sometimes rebelliously assertive of its claim for liberty and originality ; or if not, then at unexpected moments it will be seen quietly and unobtrusively to slip its chains and to soar into the free empyrean ; though, in obedience to what it mistakenly believes to be other claims upon it, it may consent to return and resume its bonds.

(7) And yet, though free and autonomous, the mystic experience is by no means arbitrary, capricious or wayward. It is no bare ecstatic feeling without meaning or contents, and without any test of validity. The test of its reality is not, it is true, its conformity to any external standard imposed by the authority of custom or tradition, but that to which we more than once referred in the last chapter, namely, its capacity for some form of rational or harmonious exfoliation. Its test is indeed the test of all real art, and, in fact, of all real life. Life, we might with exact metaphysical truth affirm, to be real only in so far as it is rational, and to become more rational as it becomes more intensely real. This profound truth, it will be remembered, was clearly recognized by Wordsworth in those words which we have more than once quoted, and which are perhaps amongst the most wonderful he ever wrote, namely, "Passion which is highest *reason* in a soul sublime." Upon these words we ventured to remark that perhaps the most exact definition of the Absolute or Perfect Experience would be that it is a sublime passion supremely rational. Now it is into direct experience of this supremely rational, creative passion of the Absolute

that the mystic aspires to enter. And, therefore, the logic that is the test of the validity of his rapture is internal, genetic, concrete ; not the merely discursive, conceptual logic of the logician. Let us endeavour once for all to rid our minds of the fallacy that abstract or conceptual logic is the only sort of rationality there is. This is the fatal blunder of the current popular pragmatism. Just as grammatical principles are implicit and regulative in all language long before books of grammar are written, and as logical principles are present and operative in all coherent thought, long before the logician sits down to write his book on logic ; just so the fundamental rationality of the universe itself is implicit, active, and controlling, in that sublime passion or rapture of the mystic, in which, as he tells us, he experiences his oneness with God. If this metaphysical interpretation of mysticism be correct, and we confess we can see no other, if the finite ego be in truth the Absolute Self, acting and revealing itself under the conditions of space and time, then to say the perfection of the Absolute seeks unimpeded expression, within of course the necessary limits of these conditions, is but to say that it acts in accordance with its true nature ; and the demand for autonomy, for internal freedom, is seen to be an essential element in the mystic experience itself, and no merely rebellious, anarchic, self-assertive claim on the part of the finite ego. For without such autonomous activity its harmonious exfoliation or expression would be impossible.

The importance of the clear recognition of this rationality in genuine mystic experience can hardly be over-estimated. In this high immediacy, we have seen, the strands of thought and feeling unite once more, and the thought element has not ceased to exist, but is controlling and regulative within the experience, and safeguards it against those wild, irrational vagaries to which otherwise mere ecstatic feeling is so liable. There is no other security that we are aware of against the danger of those fanatical,

hysterical ebullitions of emotion into which ill-regulated religious feeling is almost certain to degenerate. And this is one reason amongst others why we pleaded as we did for the recognition of the metaphysical function of the intellect. The absolutist philosophy we found supplied us with the one but sufficient objective criterion of truth and reality, namely, its rationality, and it is surely at our peril we slight or repudiate it in our test of the value and validity of religious experience. A reviewer in *The Times* of Miss Underhill's "Mystic Way," remarks that "in its depreciation of intellectual analysis and praise of intuition the cult of l'élan vital seems to dispense its votary from the necessity of thinking logically, and to offer a much easier road to wisdom by way of the emotions and will." And he goes on to say, "If any one doubts the unwisdom of slighting the intellect in spiritual development, let him compare the sanity, moral beauty, and practical effectiveness of the philosophical mystics with the alternate ecstasies and miseries, the hallucinations and unpleasant sublimated eroticism of the emotionalists, who have brought discredit on the name."¹ We quote these words for the invaluable truth they express, and because of the timely and much-needed warning to which they give utterance. The pages of religious history and biography are literally strewn with examples of the extravagances to which he alludes, perpetually admonishing us to beware of the danger ever attendant on the attempt to divorce reason from religion.

Mysticism, then, genuine mysticism, is no bare, ecstatic, religious emotion stripped of rationality, if indeed there could be such a thing; nor does it, strictly speaking, transcend reason. Rather is it, let us repeat once more, a sublime, rational immediacy in which the elements of thought and feeling, after having diverged and been distinguished in our reflective, self-conscious mind, meet and harmoniously blend once more.

¹ *Times*, Literary Supplement, 20th March 1913.

We have now come to the end of our task for the present. Some of the various pathways to Reality, or rather to the immediate apprehension of the Perfect, we must here content ourselves with doing no more than indicating. There is the pathway of the Thinker or Philosopher, there is the pathway of the Poet, the Artist, and the Musician ; and there is the pathway of the Saint. These and other ways may lead and have led the pilgrim spirit of man to mysticism or the direct experience of Absolute Perfection. But there is one prejudice against which we should ever be rigorously on our guard, namely, that there is only one way to the Absolute. "There is no calling or pursuit which is a private road to the Deity," wrote Mr Bradley in the introduction to his "Appearance and Reality." In truth, so affluent and all-embracing is the life of God, that in ways far different from the one we tread, in ways perhaps we could not tread, other finite spirits, differently constituted from ourselves, yet moved by the same infinite hunger, have found their way to God and to the peace that passes all understanding.

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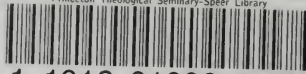
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